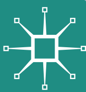

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The Byzantine City from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade, 610–1204

Urban Life after Antiquity

Luca Zavagno

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Preface

"The criminal always returns to the scene of the crime." Indeed, this project represents a return to a topic I have explored on numerous occasions before and after my Ph.D. as I was preparing my first monograph, entitled *Cities in Transition: Urbanism in Byzantium between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (AD 500–900)* (BAR 2009). Since then, a score of contributions on the topic of Byzantine urbanism have appeared; however, no introductory survey of Byzantine urbanism and the changes its experience between 600 and 1204 has ever appeared. Three preliminary caveats should be set forth, though.

First, the main idea at the very basis of this book is to propose a regional and sub-regional overview of the transformations of urban contexts in a comparative perspective, taking into consideration the peculiar geomorphological and topographical varieties of each area under scrutiny; in other words, echoing the late Martin Harrison, the focus of this diachronic approach will also be the urban developments across the mountain, the plain, and the coastline as well as the islands. In other words, this book proposes a sort of examination of the blueprint of the Byzantine urban landscape rather than a simple map of the most important and better-excavated sites.

Second, indeed, archaeology and material culture have pride of place in what remains a short and -of course- brief overview of the functional changes experienced by Byzantine urbanism. The changes in urban functions, landscape, structure, and fabric, have been explored by bringing together the most recent results stemming from urban archaeological

excavations, the results of analyses of material culture (ceramic, coins, seals), and a reassessment of the documentary and hagiographical sources. They have hopefully allowed me to propose an all-encompassing analytical approach that set the sails from the urban economy and addressed political, social, religious, and cultural issues, which all played a role in morphing the Byzantine city. Indeed, I also remain convinced that the Byzantine urban landscape can afford us a better grasp of changes to the Byzantine central and provincial administrative apparatus: the fiscal machinery, military institutions, socio-economic structures, and religious organization. Cities are, therefore, a sort of looking glass: a way of checking the reality on the ground in a world too often interpreted through the Constantinopolitan perspective. The Queen City was, of course, imitated and sought after as an architectural and urbanistic model; nevertheless, it was never reached; and as cities often remained central to the experience of many "Romans," more often than not, it remained a distant thunder in the background noise of the actual flow of Byzantine city life.

The third and last point concerns the audience of the book. Indeed, it is meant and thought for a scholarly (and not) public as well as students. Therefore, it may be called a handbook. Personally, I would rather regard it as an attempt to paint a picture of the main historiographical trends, interpretative structures, and methodological questions concerning Byzantine urbanism with a broad brush. In other words, it should ideally be regarded as a starting point for further delving into issues like economic functionality of cities, their religious and socio-political role, as well as their architectural, urbanistic, and structural manifestations along the six centuries under scrutiny here. I can only hope that when turning the last page of this book, the readers will feel that their intellectual curiosity has been stimulated enough to pursue their own journey following the trails of Byzantium and its city. After all, as Sophocles concludes: "a city that is just of one man only is no true city."[1]

Ankara, Turkey Luca Zavagno

Acknowledgments

There are many people to whom my gratitude should be extended, but it is often hard to mention them in one breath. This book has been written during extraordinary times in which the Covid-19 pandemic had changed the world as we knew it. During this immense tragedy, the "usual" and traditional academic activities and encounters came to a complete stop. Teaching turned into a bi-dimensional and virtual exercise with students perching from small windows on a screen. However, and without glossing over the difficulties instructors and students experienced, nobody turned into a solitary soliloquist. Technology helped to reach out to colleagues (most of whom I am proud to call friends) no matter how far they were. Some of them were terrific sources of inspiration and support. They helped me with advice, suggestions, and references: sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly (as some even accepted to skim through the boring draft of the book). In particular, I would like to mention Nicholas Bakirtzis (who is like an elder and wiser brother to me), Owen Miller, Jonathan Jarrett, Rebecca Darley, and Maria Cristina Carile (it was a real privilege to put the last touches to my book while in Ravenna); to me, they are more than colleagues: they are invaluable mentors on top of being superb scholars.

I also had the good luck to discuss and debate some of the concepts and ideas included in this book with the students of some of the courses I held at Bilkent University. They also provided invaluable food for thoughts. I can name but a few of them (but to all goes my token of appreciation and gratitude): Harun Celik, Yunus Dogan, Aysenur Mulla, Humberto De

Luigi, and Zeynep Olgun. To my “dottoranda” Fermude Gulsevinç goes a special praise for her patience with a supervisor like me and because she reviewed the manuscript and convinced me that Stravinsky’s was not too bad a metaphor after all.

Finally, I would like to mention my mum, my stepdad Mariangelo, my sister Marianna, Eddie Luca, my brother-in-law Antonio and -above all- my wife Federica, and my daughter Sofia, to whom this book is dedicated; cause without them, I would not have been able to write a single sentence of it or of anything I scribbled in the past fifteen years.

Note

1. Sophocles, *Antigone* (2003). R. Gibbons and C. Segal (Eds.). Oxford, 85.

Praise for *The Byzantine City from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade, 610–1204*

"This is a most welcome and important contribution in the study of Byzantine cities, a topic of growing scholarly interest. Drawing from a range of historical sources and archaeological results this book offers a compelling overview of the socioeconomic and cultural complexity of the Byzantine city and its significance for our understanding of the history of Byzantium."

—Nikolas Bakirtzis, *The Cyprus Institute*

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CHAPTER 1

The Byzantine City: A Symphony in Three Movements

Abstract This chapter presents the reader with three preliminary and different themes that will recur across the book as taking their cue from the changes of some exemplary Byzantine cities like Ephesos and Euchaita. The first has to do with the importance of tracking the transformation of the urban functions across space and time. The second concern the methodological approach adopted in the book. Indeed, the changes in urban functions, landscape, structure, and fabric will be explored by bringing together the most recent results stemming from urban archaeological excavations, the results of analyses of material culture (ceramic, coins, seals), and a reassessment of the documentary and hagiographical sources. The third aims to explain how Byzantine urban sites located in different parts of the empire (Byzantine heartland vis a vis the coastal-insula koine) reverberated the changes experienced by the political, social, and economic imperial super-structure a regional and sub-regional level.

Keywords Urban functionalities • Archaeology • Material culture • Literary sources

In 1939, shortly after Germany invaded Poland, Igor Stravinsky, already a world-known composer, left Russia to expatriate in the United States. However, the first significant work of his American years came about only

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at the end of World War Two: The Symphony in Three Movements.[1] Stravinsky's symphony overtly acknowledged the terrible events of the recent conflict as the source of inspiration: the massacre of the Chinese population by the Japanese army, the goose-stepping march of the Nazi soldiers, and finally, the victory of the Allies in 1945. Often referred to as a "war symphony," the work is peculiar for being pieced together by re-organizing and reusing material and themes either left incomplete or meant for a somewhat different audience (including a movie) (Oliver 1995, 152–6).

As it would be puzzling to Stravinsky himself, I regard his symphony as a good starting point to describe the transformation experienced by the Byzantine city in the period between the end of Late Antiquity to the Fourth Crusade. It occurred to me how it could be seen as a convenient metaphor for the three historiographical and chronological frameworks, which encapsulate the trajectories of the urban phenomenon in the empire as it fully inherited the Roman ideological, cultural and social conception of a city-based polity (Sarris 2015, 7; Loseby 2009, 139–40). The "Allegro" could easily make us think of the late fourth-to-late sixth century period of economic and political expansion of the city; the Andante could infer to the changes experienced by the urban culture, image, and fabric in the so-called Dark Ages of Byzantium (Decker 2016, 81–122); finally, the "con Moto" would represent the economic growth cities in the Balkans and (partially) Asia Minor as paired with an economic and cultural "Renaissance" which started under the auspices of the Macedonian dynasty and *de facto* ended with the catastrophic Fourth Crusade.

Such a tripartition has the clear advantage of making Byzantine history more practicable (James 2010, 2); however, as this book will only focus on the second and third stages of this division -taking the cue from the rise of what Whittow (1996) labeled as Orthodox Byzantium – a tripartite chronology could be regarded a fancy disguise for proposing a rather traditional historiographic approach to the problems of the development of the Byzantine *forma Urbis* (Concina 2003). As will be seen, this approach has been labeled by scholars simply as a journey from Classic polis to Medieval kastron (Müller-Wiener 1986; Brandes 1999; Dunn 1994) or as a sort of "Darwinian evolution" of the city cut short in the mid-seventh century and restarted in the mid-tenth century (Foss 1977; Angold 1985, 19).

Obviously, and before dealing with an historiography of Byzantine urbanism and its historical trajectories, one should focus on a definition of Byzantine city. How can we try to define and encompass the concept of

urbanism in an empire whose territorial extension drastically changed over the six-century time span covered by this book? What is the real significance of the noun-adjective agreement between "city" and "Byzantine"? How can we track the changing interpretations, perceptions, and images of the city as swinging between the definition attributed to the urban animation in contemporary literary sources (like chronicles, encomia, and hagiographies) and the archaeological reality of urban structures and infrastructure on the ground?

Before try and answer these questions, I would like to start with a rather perfunctory observation. In a world where surfing the net is regarded as the essential and preliminary act to researching any subject, typing the words "Byzantine city" in any internet search takes researchers and students alike to a rather coherent but repetitive list of results. Constantinople captures the lion's share of results as three cities shared the place of honor: Alexandria (lost to the empire in 644–6) (Sijpestejin 2007), Thessalonike and Antioch (also lost to the Arabs in the mid-seventh century and "reconquered" in the mid-tenth century only to be lost again one century later) (Kennedy 1992).[2] Moreover, and more important for the timespan this book is centered on, the Wikipedia's entry for "Cities of the Byzantine Empire" does not cover the period after the sixth century for its bibliography is seldom including scholarly works which covered the period post-eighth century;[3] this despite several studies produced in the last two decades as centering on the history and archaeology of single urban sites as focusing exclusively or at least partially on the period spanning from the ninth to the early thirteenth century (Kiousopoulou 2012; Niewöhner 2017). One could cite here, for instance, the works of Bouras (2010) on mid-Byzantine Athens, the short urban key-studies in the Economic History of Byzantium (Laiou 2002), the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium on Late Byzantine Thessalonike including the seminal article of Bakirtzis (2003) and Jacoby (2003), as well as the contributions on Corinth (Sanders 2003), and Monemvasia (Kalligas 2010).

As I will return to the chronological unbalance characterizing studies on Byzantine urbanism, it is important here to try and tackle the two intertwined questions: how can we define a city? How can we label the urban phenomenon as Byzantine? The two questions are inescapably intertwined for -as Tzvikis (2020) remarks- we are confronted with the lack of characteristics classifying a Byzantine city; although he refers mainly to the so-called Dark Ages, Tzivikis' conclusion can be extended to the Byzantine millennium at large. Byzantinists have often tried to look for a

one-size-fits-all model path of urbanism (a journey from polis to kastron and back again see Fig. 1.1). For instance, Quiroga (2016, 94) has concluded against the use of the term "Byzantine city" as it is a terminological and semantic problem that did not stem from the archaeology and material culture. "This is not because there is a specifically Byzantine […] architecture or a Byzantine […] city different one from the other; that terminology is due to the change of political contexts which qualify material evidence one way or another. Therefore, it is the political domain which gives a logical semantics to the terms Byzantine […], then we should speak about post-Roman cities in Byzantine times.".

Indeed, Byzantinists (historians and archaeologists alike) have repeatedly referred to the famous set of criteria set forth by Martin Biddle (1976), notwithstanding the fact they were developed with Anglo-Saxon cities in mind.[4] According to his scheme, a city should have 1. Defenses, 2. Planned street system, 3. Market(s), 4. Mint, 5. Legal Autonomy, 6. Role as a central place, 7. Relatively dense and large population, 8.

Fig. 1.1 Ancyra (tod. Ankara), prow-ship tower of the city walls (the so-called kastron dated to mid-seventh to mid-ninth century)

Diversified economic base, 9. Plots and houses of urban type, 10. Social differentiation, 11. Complex religious organization, 12. Judicial functions (Biddle 1976, 100). Taking his cue from Biddle's list, Johannes Koder (1986, 156–67) defines a (Byzantine) city as a settlement with a considerable share of non-agricultural functions, and has a high concentration of buildings with close spatial zones forming specific neighborhoods; Arthur (1991) when examining the case of Naples as satisfying seven of Biddle's criteria also builds on Richard Hodges (1982, 20–25) definition of an urban community as a settlement with a sizable demography larger than any area relying on pure subsistence for most of the inhabitants were not busy with agrarian pursuits. The community should also have one institution. Curta (2006, 430) also focuses on socio-economic criteria as he examines the trajectories of Balkan cities, which should be defined by the presence of non-agricultural activities and classes extracting income from them although they did not develop into an autonomous community of merchants and craftsmen. Some historians have labeled any attempt to circumscribe the notion of the city as pure abstract and merely evocative exercise, for they also denounced any attempt to define the very meaning of the concept of city as futile (Dagron 2002, 393–4; Bouras 2013, 44); others have implicitly conjured up the idea, ideal and image of the Classical polis as the Puskian "stone guest" of any definition of the urban phenomenon and the yardstick against which one should measure any successive form of urbanism (Angold 1985). As Decker (2016, 81) states, "the city was germane to Roman governance, identity and sense of belonging (the regular planning, similarity of public spaces and amenities, access to goods and representation of the Roman state helped to unify the empire at least at the level of elites)." Indeed, the Byzantine Empire was still a mosaic of cities in the sixth century (for it inherited the world created by Rome as organized around the city, their councils, and the devolved fiscal and political system they facilitated) (Foss 2001, 86–7; Zanini 2014, 196; Sarris 2015, 7).

Although I certainly see the merit of stressing the importance of Greek-Roman *poleis* as the sinews of the imperial socio-political body, I found myself resistant to the idea of a ready-made set of monumental, spatial, ideological, ceremonial, and infrastructural characteristics which needs to be replicated in any region or area of the Mediterranean as inescapable markers of the urban (Decker 2016, 82). Such an analytical stance is prone to the risk of glossing over the complex socio-cultural, political, and economic interplay between city and countryside (Trombley 1993, 429;

438–40) or even to regard a polis as antithetical to its chora (Dagron 2002, 398–401); moreover, we can find ourselves prisoner to the concept and picture of a city as offered by the Classical authors and later by their enthusiastic Byzantine emulators (Saradi 2012). Finally, the long shade projected by the Classical polis obscures the fact that as Ward-Perkins (2008, 410) concludes, "describing the cities of the empire is like describing a moving target made up of different parts, all traveling in roughly the same direction, but at very different speeds and with different individual trajectories."

As a result, we are encouraged to sail away from a ready-made concept of city and embrace functional regional outcomes of urbanism that did not entirely fall into any traditional categorization. One could regard a city as a conglomeration of administrative, economic, and cultural/cultic functions for the surrounding countryside and an intermediary to hierarchically bigger units. Vionis (2017) has cogently showed the validity of such a model for the region of Boeotia in central Greece for the period spanning between Late Antiquity and the arrival of the Franks in the thirteenth century. While encouraging us to use the archaeological record to question labels like "ruralized", "shifting", and fortified "cities", he also assesses the political and economic circumstances impacting upon regional and subregional settlement pattern. In his view, cities and "microtowns" should be regarded as transformed entities rather than as degenerate versions of monumental late antique cities/polis with altered perceptions of scale and monumentality. For instance, the fact that some these settlements had bishopric status in the eleventh and twelfth century indicates that they were large and important although the archaeological record point to them as nothing more than villages (Vionis 2017, 170–3). This has led to stress the importance of a hierarchical system of central places with secondary settlements as the intermediary between the rural hinterland and the consumer cities (Koder 1986; Vionis 2018, 54–65). The latter are sometimes labeled as agro-towns (Arthur 2006, 32) as those excavated in central Sicily (Philosophiana) (Vaccaro 2013) and on the so-called Limestone Massif in Syria; both were large settlements, which did not have municipal status or bishops, but were on a larger demographic and structural scale than villages (Tate 1992; Foss 2001, 87–95).

These should also be included in what Alan Harvey describes as a rather complex geopolitical and economic syntax of the urban phenomenon as predicated upon provincial market centers with a modicum of commodity production, coastal towns funneling the production of their hinterland

and cities in which local inhabitants were also agricultural producers (consolidating crash crop selling in the local market) (Harvey 1989, 261). Archie Dunn (1994), using the Balkans as his main frame of reference, has proposed a categorization including the civic urban settlements, as the upper level of any settlement system as followed by non-civic urban settlements and non-civic nonurban fortifications or fortified settlements; a categorization whose complexity can be examined only through archaeology and topography (Dunn 1994, 60).

In fact, one should admit that functions do not necessarily coalesce into a central place. In this light, a recent regional study on Epirus has allowed Veikou to elaborate upon the regional dispersion of the religious function as the seats of bishoprics were rather "hybrid" and "in-between" rural and urban settlement formations with both rural and urban features. In particular Episcopal sees in Southern Epiros do not seem to have corresponded to any clear, distinct type of settlement (Veikou 2009, 44–51). Other examples of areas where a functional variety of responses to the socio-political and economic changes at the Mediterranean scale determined the creation of different models of urbanism are represented by Amalfi and the so-called Adriatic rim between seventh to tenth century (McCormick 2001, 361–9; 795–8).

The former reveals as an example of "urban" mercantile conglomeration whose functions were once again framed by the overarching economic vitality of the whole Sorrentine peninsula lasting into the eleventh century (Abulafia 2019). The latter saw the foundation of both a new city (Civitas Nova Heracliana) and the rise of an Adriatic *emporium* (Comacchio): an eighth and ninth century site where the tempo of production and distribution of goods as well as imports and consumption was not dictated by the Byzantine army or bureaucrats (Gelichi et al. 2012; McCormick 2012). Located at the confluence of important waterways, both settlements boasted only limited monumental areas (mainly the important churches) as large parts of the sites were endowed with wooden platform-docks, waterfront, and embankments: a cityscape and fabric which reminds us of a typology of urbanism which developed and thrived in areas far away from the Mediterranean Sea like the so-called north-Sea *emporia* (Augenti 2011, 55–134; Hodges 2012, 93–115). Indeed, they both had a vital economy based upon trade relationship between western Europe and the Byzantine sphere of political and economic influence in particular after the fall of the capital of Byzantine exarchate (Ravenna) to the Lombards in 751 (Cirelli 2008). One can, however, object that

neither of these examples of urban development can be fully characterized as properly Byzantine, for Amalfi remained under loosely direct Byzantine control only until the mid-ninth century (Skinner 2017), and the rise of Rivo-Alto/Venice led to a semi-independent path of the lagoons sublimated by the conquest and sack of Comacchio on the part of the Venetians in the late ninth century (McCormick 2001, 526–31; Wickham 2005, 690–2).

The abovementioned examples, nevertheless, point to the importance of tracking the transformation of the urban functions across space and time. Such a functional approach to the transformations experienced by urbanism helps us to illuminate the fluctuating use of public and private space, the conversion of the monumental landscape, the changes to spatial structures (streets and squares) where city life manifested itself (through political ceremonies, religious processions, or market activities) (Hartnett 2017, 1–22). As it will be seen later, spatial changes are integral to an archaeologically based model of intensification and abatement of urban settlements; the latter has indeed been used by Avni (2011) and -more conclusively- Whittow (2013) to interpret the changing appearance of the city as the result of long-term functional economic and social processes whose tempo was not dictated simply by political events. In this light, it is important to return to the importance of overcoming the historiographical narrative as based upon the juxtaposition of urban vs. rural (and ruralization of urban social fabric and structure vis-à-vis the Classical cityscape); this by employing different and alternative analytical categories like nucleated and dispersed settlements or a more nuanced variety of settlement patterns (Veikou 2012, 163). Brubaker and Haldon (2011, 534) went as far as employing the oxymoron "ruralized city" to describe a separate type of urbanism where green spaces encroached upon the cityscape and enhanced the local economy.

This is why I have myself proposed a definition of the city as a "multifunctional" settlement must take into consideration the historical trajectories of the empire at large as well as the changing patterns of investments, socio-cultural attitudes, political roles, and social relevance of urban-based elites (Zavagno 2009, 7). Indeed, as the diachronic maps published by Michael Hendy (1985) and Haldon (2010, 79) clearly show, Byzantium remained an urbanized empire throughout its entire existence. Although, with regional social, cultural, and political variations across the empire, it is the resilience of cities as continuing foci of relative concentrations of population, monumental landscape, functional and ideological raison

d'être, and residence of the secular and religious elites that should be stressed (Dey 2015, 136).

In this light, one should also consider how each of regions boasted rather fluid and variable governmental structures and political allegiance to the center as local urban elites showed a unique understanding of the socio-economic, military, and cross-cultural dynamics characterizing the urban life in the Medieval Mediterranean (Valérian 2014). These were not indeed peculiar to the so-called periphery only, for an important city like Attaleia (mod. Antalya; see Fig. 1.2) -on which I will also return later- can be effectively be defined as a thematic capital of the Byzantine heartland and an imperial navy-base fully engrained in Constantinopolitan-centered hierarchic defensive network as set up in the late seventh century (Foss 1996, 4–13); but at the same time, the city could also be regarded as a liminal site exposed to diverse cultural influences, a fully developed mercantile harbor which remained operative until it was lost to Byzantium post-1204 and -as Demetris Krallis (2019, 66) cogently proved- as a city-state, operationally semi-independent, able to fend for itself and whose elites were deeply involved in the shipping and trading networks linking southern Anatolia with Cyprus and the Levant (Zavagno 2011). Sheltered

Fig. 1.2 Antalya's city harbor and its walls

by its imposing walls perching above a sea-bay -in a way that reminds us of Monemvasia in the Peloponnese and Cherson and Amastris on the Black Sea (on which I will all return in Chap. 3)- Attaleia could be pictured as belonging at the same time to two opposing Byzantine urban typologies. On the one hand, it was the capital of a naval theme and the seat of one detachment of the Byzantine fleet; on the other, it could easily be labeled as part of a "maritime *koine*" for it betrayed a rather peculiar fluidity of social-cultural environment and a rather vital economic life not fully determined by state-oriented elites.

This koine has been described as encompassing an insular/coastal society and united through a long-standing framework of resilient urban centers (Wickham 2012, 504). Indeed, as Arthur (2012, 339) states, we are confronted with "a series of sites and artifacts that have come to light across the Mediterranean that suggest a certain common intent and cultural unity on a number of different levels across and within Byzantine controlled territory." This chimes with Jonathan Shepard's idea the idea of an Imperial territorial structure of power working along a low-maintenance and variable geometry empire's lines (Shepard 2017, 11). He focuses on the so-called peripheral outlets of the empire and stresses the importance of both bunkers/kastron and open cities/gateway communities as essential to the long political game Byzantium continued to play in the Western Mediterranean (Shepard 2018; Zavagno 2018).

So, in this book insular and coastal urban sites will also be examined as ideally bridging gap between what traditional historiography has regarded as the two major chronological markers in the history of Byzantine urbanism in the Balkans and Asia Minor: the early seventh and the tenth century. The former ushered in the beginning of the general crisis of the post-Late Antique city; the latter heralded the accelerated pace of revival and growth of cities and towns (Bouras 2002, 501).

Incidentally, these moments coincide with what Wickham (2004) has famously labeled as the two Mediterranean trade cycles (Antiquity and Middle Ages). The first had a fiscal motor which led to the unification of the Great Sea, along the longer-distance sipping routes; in the second, more consistently commercial reasons linked with regionally tax-based systems of exchange to restitute a good level of complexity to the Mediterranean economy. Islands, in particular, seem to have been places where the gap between the aforementioned cycles was bridged, for throughout the seventh and eighth-century islands, they were an economic space relatively more developed than northern and central Italy, the

Balkans or Anatolia (Cosentino 2013, 73; Horden and Purcell 2020, 138). So, the Byzantine koine should act as a reminder of the importance of considering how the different geographies and exchange networks influenced the diverse typologies and morphologies of Byzantine urbanism. Two further considerations related to the urban facies of Byzantium could be proposed here as inspired by Stravinsky's musical work.

The first has to do with the changes experienced by the political, social, and economic imperial super-structure in the period under scrutiny. As Haldon (2011) cogently remarks: the changes in the political forms of appropriation, consumption, and redistribution of social wealth, the transformation of the imperial elites, the changes to the fiscal and administrative structures, the territorial losses, the reorganization of the army, the advent of Christianity and the socio-political preeminence of the bishops all had enormous repercussion on the urban fabric, planning, and infrastructure, as well as the way city life, was experienced, perceived and imagined. As Stravinsky's Symphony reverberates different moments of the world conflict for it morphed them into various musical movements, so each city echoed and embodied the changes of the historical context at the imperial level. In other words, as Jean-Michael Spieser remarks, "the transformation of the city is only one aspect of a broader evolution […] and we can see how a sub-system, that of towns or cities. depended for its evolution on the evolution of a whole system of civilization but at the same time fed into the whole." (Spieser 2001, 14). Although the sociological penchant of Spieser's analysis taps into the idea of an evolutionary pattern of the urban phenomenology, one can see that Stravinsky's sheet music (enthused by external events) is used by single instruments and performers as a guide to play together. So, the changes at the socio-economic level as paired with historical occurrences (like wars, natural disasters, or recurring plagues) were the overarching "melody" single cities constantly tried to adapt their urban functions, landscape, structure, and fabric to (Zavagno 2009, 1–7).

In this light, and in tune with the second point I would like to drive home here, one should consider the sheets for single instruments as well as the inclinations, abilities, and level of music literacy of single performers. In other words, when playing a symphonic piece, the single-player or singer can adjust and "interpret" their own instrument's tone and pitch in the same way as cities can do when facing the transformations experienced by the socio-political and economic system, they are part and parcel to. So one should pay attention to the variety of urban solutions to the problems

of the post-Late Antique period the regional and sub-regional trajectories each urban site experienced when the Medieval Mediterranean went through the fragmentation and simplification of the Roman and Late Antique unified economic system, political structures and communication routes from the seventh century on (McCormick 2001, 115–22; Wickham 2005, 780–94).

But if the Medieval Mediterranean did not represent a unified political and economic system any longer, this did not imply that *urbanitas* did not pass away, as showed for instance by Dey (2015, 65–124) with regard to the continuity of ceremonial and processional routes as often staged in the colonnaded, orthogonal street grid. For instance, we should indeed be cautious when proposing a generalized picture of the complete lack of urban vitality resulting from the dismantling of monumental urban buildings (Quiroga 2016, 92). In fact, this may somewhat entail a rearrangement of the urban functionalities and identities as influenced by the reorganization of the state fiscal machinery, administrative organization, and military structure as well as the priorities of local elites at regional and supra-regional level; that this phenomenon remains more visible in the so-called maritime Byzantine koine help us to better grasp the kaleidoscope of diverse and changing functions as arranged in a typology of urban settlement which (partially) differed from the thematic capitals of the Anatolian plateau or the Aegean.

Indeed, the importance of considering regional trajectories echoes with the categorization of cities between successful and unsuccessful, or better natural and artificial (Arthur 2006, 29). The former benefitted from their location as central settlements to a fertile hinterland and nucleation points for a population focusing on non-agricultural activities and nodes of effective communication networks. Such a definition of successful cities stems from a quintessential archaeological methodological approach to the problem of urbanism as paired with a familiarity with a geographical urban epistemology (Koder 2006; Vionis 2017). In other words, Arthur's urban taxonomy is rooted in the idea that city and town had its own individual character and direction even within general trends of developments (Christie 2016, 229). For instance, Martin Harrison (2001), Hendy (1985), Haldon (2010), and, more recently, James Howard Johnston (2019) have alerted to the importance of considering the relationship between urbanism (and its socio-political and economic structures) and the diverse regional landscapes (coastlands, mountain ranges, and Anatolian plateau).However, we should consider that the so-called

Byzantine heartland, which as famously defined by Wickham (2005, 29–32), included the Aegean and the Anatolian plateau, experienced a deurbanization of roughly 80% in the early Middle Ages.

Indeed, the cities which survived often acted as music players whose cultural and musical background can impinge upon their ways of interpreting their sheet even when performing in an ensemble. In the case of a Byzantine city and its inhabitants, it is also essential to consider that Constantinople acted as a constant and continuous reference point for all the cities of the empire as they molded elements of their city fabric and ritual life on those provided by the "Queen of Cities." (Jacobs 2012). However, the imitation of Constantinopolitan life was not the only factor in modulating the response of a single urban entity to the transforming political, ideological, economic, and cultural priorities at the Imperial level. Cities are mainly characterized by the wide range of functions they fulfill. Functions dictate the tempo of city life, set the boundaries of the social interaction and lifestyle while at the same time determining the role each urban settlement plays within the spatial organization and settlement pattern at large (Grohmann 2005, 44–5).

For example, environmental, geographical, and even cultural and religious factors vis-à-vis the post-Arab political and military geography of Anatolia explain why a city like Euchaita changed its morphology and function in the period between the eighth and the twelfth century (Haldon 2018, 210–56). Located on the north of the central section of the Anatolian peninsula, Euchaita (see Fig. 1.3) was nothing more than an average provincial town granted a civic status only by emperor Anastasius (491–526) (Elton 2018, 187). Until three decades ago, Byzantinists would have simply dismissed as a typical Roman middle range settlement which disappeared as engulfed by the twirls of the Persian (Foss 1977) and later Arab invasions (Mango 1980, 60–87). Although endowed with a city wall and boasting a bishopric, the city was neither the capital of any Late Antique province nor later developed into a capital of a *strategia* (later a theme).[5] In this light, the fate of the urban settlement was also molded by local environmental dynamics. The Anatolian plateau experienced shifting and unstable climatic conditions (Izdbesky 2013), leading to a dramatic change in the agrarian production to cater to the needs of the government, the army, and the provincial producing population (Haldon 2016, 249–77). Environmental pressure should be paired with the important role the city continued to play as a pilgrimage center. It lodged the relics of one of the most famous Byzantine military saints: Saint Theodore the

Fig. 1.3 Seals of Philaretos, Metropolitan of Euchaita, Tenth Century/o-r. (Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection)

Recruiter. The saint was celebrated by two collections of miracles and a well-known panegyrion (market fair) (Brandes 1999, 48–49).

Contrary to centers like Ancyra or Amorium (on which I will return later), Euchaita never had a large population or benefitted from a commanding position along the land routes crisscrossing the Anatolian plateau; nevertheless, from the mid-seventh century onwards, it fulfilled a variety of functions military, religious, economic, administrative, and agrarian varying according to the local political and economic conditions (Haldon 2018, 248).

Euchaita represents a good example (although, of course, not the only one) of an urban settlement that experienced a "successful" development in the aftermath of the Arab invasions. Nevertheless, its relative success should be projected against a backcloth of a changing functional role of cities and scaling down of urbanization in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages (Sarris 2010, 35). So, the political, military, economic, and cultural urban functions of Euchaita developed and morphed as they did not entirely depend on a deliberate imperial effort aiming at exalting the role of this settlement in the centrally-planned defensive strategy against the Arab incursions which seasonally wreaked havoc moving across the Arab-Byzantine frontier (Kennedy and Haldon 1980; Eger 2014).[6] In other words, Euchaita was not simply an "island of refuge" (Haldon 2006, 614–20; Veikou 2012). The local population, as well as the inhabitants of the villages and households dotting its immediate

surroundings, could indeed find occasional shelter behind its fortified acropolis; they depended on its walls as well as on the role Euchaita played as pilgrimage center which sustained a rather vital urban economy (Crow 1996, 31).

Indeed, as ramparts bespeak of retrenchment and shrinkage of Late Antique urban centers as they moved into the Middle Ages, they also enhanced different patterns of wealth investment and functionality; they could act as a temporary refuge or enhance administrative and religious foci of settlement as documented in the showcase new city of Justiniana Prima (Ivanišević 2016). In fact, more often than not, walls did not encase the whole city-life experience (as briefly seen in Euchaita). As a result, and although cities shared common planning, structural and conceptual tools -and above all rather sophisticated defensive structures- it is rather difficult to regard them as encapsulating a one-size-fits-all model of urban settlement. In this light, a look from the coastal and insular koine allows us to restrain from suggesting that only urban sites relevant to the state (and its military and political needs) or to the greater part of the ruling elite survived, as other cities were simply abandoned or became refuge (*kastra*) (Mango 1980, 73).

As I will return to the latter point later, I would like to stress here that the multi-functional interpretative approach to the issues of transformation and adaptation of the urban "carapace" in terms of architecture, landscape, identity, spatial use, and spatiality, allows a better and comprehensive explanation of the changing relationship between social and human fabric and the urban structures of the same cities (Zanini 2016, 132). Economic criteria are helpful as based on the vitality of urban-oriented elites, which dictated the tempo and the level of demand and therefore of the production and productivity, while at the same time structuring the urban environment along political and administrative as well as religious and cultural lines. From the Late Antiquity onwards, there was always a biunivocal relation between urban economic activities and administrative centrality. The scale of private exchange depended on aristocratic spending power (Wickham 2005, 594). Nevertheless, the open cities, urban-like, or third-space functional sites and islets as characterizing a hierarchy of settlement in an insular-coastal koine, enhance a rather resilient level of inter and intra-regional shipping and trading networks and point to the transformation of the socio-economic, political and cultural profile of those same aristocrats now labeled as *potentiores* (Zanini 2007, 27).

These have been defined as a new-macro class made of civic, military, and religious authorities and characterized essentially by the ownership of locally entrenched social and economic power mainly based on extra-urban landed properties (Zanini 2016, 137–9). As these elites remained urban-oriented, they acted as the engine of urban economic resilience and the activity of men and women who lived and worked in smaller and more fragmented, although economically lively, urban housing units (Zanini 2019; Veikou 2019). In this light, archaeology and material culture help us to fully grasp the new patterns of investment on the part of these new elites (as converging more on ecclesiastical buildings), as well as the scale of demonumentalization of the former Classic cityscape as encroached by artisanal and commercial activities.

An interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach pairing literary and material sources is essential here. Urban archaeology has drastically developed over the past decades, and analysis of material indicators has shed light on previously unsuspected avenues of connectivity (Arthur 2018; Decker 2018). So, stratigraphically aware excavations, extensive or intensive urban surveys, ceramics, coins, inscriptions, seals, and metalworks are essential to assess the developments of urban economy, socio-cultural life, and political-administrative identity as well and military functions as reflected in the diversity of regional urban forms, fabric, and townscape (Decker 2016).

This final methodological assertion is indeed in tune with a coda of this introductory chapter. Although a search for different but coherent models and types of Byzantine urbanism in the period between ca. 600 to 1204 will be pursued in the next pages, the discussion of urban trends and developments will be heavily based on archaeology. This not to diminish the importance of literary and documentary sources or simply regard them as a corollary to material evidence. On the one hand, it is true that -as Wickham (2009, 12) states- “early medieval history-writing is a permanent struggle with the few sources available, as historians try, often over and over again, to extract nuanced historical accounts from them.” On the other hand, one should be aware that Byzantine sources were written in the capital by authors who were members of the inner circle of power and deeply enmeshed in Constantinople-centered politics (Kaldellis 2015, 150). Finally, as partially mentioned already, one should take into consideration the limitations and biased perspective offered by Byzantine documentary, legal, and literary evidence as the writers have to abide by the specific rules of a certain tradition (Sarris 2010, 25–8); a good example is

offered by hagiographies who produce and advertise a distorted image of the city and urban culture. Saradi, for instance, presents us with a compelling analysis of hagiographical texts from the seventh century to the end of the Byzantine millennium, which highlights how "the setting of most of the Lives is [initially] rural, and this feature has been evidently interpreted as pointing to urban decline [whereas] in the Middle Byzantine era a medieval image of the city and its culture is presented, with detailed descriptions of the poor and of scenes of violence and the public humiliation of pious men" (Saradi 2014, 442).

Here one should, however, not allow the methodological pendulum to the other extreme. Indeed, Byzantine archaeology has long moved from a quest for documenting the narrative of literary sources and acknowledged that the relationship between text and material culture is more complex and more enriching than often thought (Rautman 1990, 146–51; Crow 2010). Jean Roussel (1986), Dunn (1994), and more recently Sarris (2010, 25–31), Decker (2016, 2018), and Tzvikis (2012, 2020) have nevertheless stressed some of the drawbacks of archaeological evidence as they suffered from the reality of research on the ground (Bouras 2002, 498–500). Without any pretense of exhaustivity, one can list here: the little excavation conducted in cities which remained frequented and relevant to the Empire and as a corollary the selective results produced by modern excavations (often conducted in emergency or rescue situations); the misinterpretation of stratigraphy as often stemming from the Classical focus of previous excavations (Wickham 2005, 626; Jacobs 2012, 116); the augmented focus offered by monumental archaeology often centered on major ecclesiastical buildings or prominent fortifications (Dunn 1994, 79; Crow 2010); the predominance of a positivist approach to excavations as opposed to the need for post-processualism in the study of urban sites (Rautman 1990, 158–62; Zanini 2016, 129; Decker 2016, 38–9); and finally, the importance of regarding any gap (as for instance, lack of ceramic finds or coins) as an absence of evidence rather than evidence for absence. Indeed, since any "absence has long been viewed as reflecting real demographic and social change and a reflection of profound reorientations of the nature of urban life in the empire, this model derived from archeology [often] served to reinforce the notion of the decline of Roman civilization and the otherness of Byzantium." (Decker 2018, 3).

Bio-archaeological, environmental, digital, and archaeometric tools of analysis (Quiroga 2016, 88–91; Haldon 2016, 215–48), and the extensive and stratigraphically aware excavations conducted on continuously

frequented Byzantine sites like Amorium, Corinth, Gortyn and Pergamon appeared to have offset abovementioned issues (at least partially). More important, if material culture and archaeology are part of the perceived space whereas literary sources show us the conceived space, we remain in the dark when it comes to urban lived space and spatial experiences particularly. Therefore, one cannot but recognize that we can outbid the invisibility of the urban population and, in particular, its elites by embracing an archaeology of people and their everyday life instead of an archaeology of monuments (Horden and Purcell 2000, 88–122). Indeed, De Certeau (1984, 94) sees a city as a combination of buildings and streets as well as the movements and actions of its inhabitants. It is, therefore, essential to consider those creative strategies of adaptation urban dwellers employed as they navigated throughout urban spaces and society for this entails a dialogic and polyphonic relationship between the urbanites and the cityscape (Hartnett 2017, 14).

In this light, it will be possible to look at phenomena like the encroachment of colonnaded streets or public spaces by residential (or commercial) structures as a part of a bottom-up view of the urban entity with the inhabitants assigning new meanings, use, and function to existing buildings. For instance, Veikou (2020, 25) has recently stressed the importance of reconsidering spatial practices of encroachment and subdivision of residential buildings as read less in simple terms of crisis, fear, and increase insecurity. In this light, one can consider the less conspicuous (archaeologically) but nevertheless essential role played by the infrastructures related to the supply of water and bread (Giorgi 2017). Following the flow of urban waters (aqueducts, fountains, and pipelines) and tracing the location of those structures deputed to baking and distributing bread are formidable tools to understand how the way urban spaces were structured and organized; investigating the traces of bread production instead helps us to fathom the ways in which those spaces functioned on daily basis (Zanini 2015, 373). In this way, archaeology further allows us to overcome the distorting effects of a large number of bifocal perspectives (state/local elites, capital/provincial cities, polis/kastron, city/countryside), which scholars have used to grasp with the trajectory of Byzantine urbanism between the end of Late Antiquity and the fall of the Byzantine empire in 1204. After all, as Christie (2006, 19–20) concludes, "archaeology offers an alternative and complementary tapestry of the past in terms of the buildings, material, and lifestyle of those people [elites and not] who populated […] periods of historic transitions […] Thus if historical data

might allow us to perceive why and how such changes occurred; the archaeology allows us to view how individuals, [urban] settlements and the state responded, tried to respond or adapted to ever-changing circumstances."

Indeed, it is my intention to unravel a tapestry as composed by the abovementioned themes in the following chapters of the book. As this conclusive part is, therefore the third and final movement of this introductory symphony I would like to briefly introduce the reader to the structure of the book. Chapter 2 will try to follow the trail of Byzantine historiography and the methodological implications the main sources different scholars have used to interpret the transformation of Byzantine cities in the period under scrutiny. It will try to move away from the traditional historiographical debate on continuity vs. discontinuity in the Roman and Late Antique city into the Middle Ages. Indeed, one should realize that this dichotomic paradigm of rise and fall hinges on both a superficial notion of decline that can only impede a full consideration of the dynamics of urban functional change and renewal, and the idea that for the two centuries after Phocas (602–10) Byzantium was in a state of constant crisis (Cormack 1990, 26). This not to gloss over the struggle for survival which the Byzantine empire faced for natural catastrophe and warfare dominated a large part of the seventh-to-ninth century (Auzépy 2009), but rather to stress that chronological and geographical variations do not entail any generalization cause the whole state did not disintegrate overnight (Bouras 2002, 501).

In this light, a diachronic approach will be proposed as it will be framed first and foremost by the fragmentation of the Mediterranean shipping routes and networks of exchange, the demographic consequence of the Arab and Avar-Slavic invasions- as paired by forced migrations and transplantation of population across the empire, and -more importantly- the reorganization of the administrative, military and political Imperial structures which (for the most part) remained in place through the eleventh-century crisis and the arrival of the Norman and the Seljuks until the Fourth Crusade.

As a result, Chap. 3 will offer a regional –or perhaps even subregional-viewpoint presenting the reader the various and mutable incarnations of Byzantine cities. As mentioned, and as the exceptional Constantinopolitan urban history and life will not be but sporadically included in the present overview (Magdalino 2007), this book will comprise the so-called periphery of Byzantium (as part and parcel of the abovementioned Byzantine

koine) since heretofore urbanism on Byzantine islands (and distant coastal outlets) has too often been regarded as irrelevant to the transformations happening in the Byzantine heartland. Indeed, urban structures, infrastructures, and functions always developed according to local and peculiar practices as well as expedient needs. In this sense, Anatolia, the Aegean as well as the insular coastal koine reflected their multifaceted and diverse, although in general resilient, fiscal and political bonds with the capital and its court. Nevertheless, key studies will be singled out in tune with a regional/sub-regional approach, for, in my opinion, it will allow the reader to better grasp the common traits as well as the peculiarities of urban development across different territories and local geo-morphologies of the empire.

The period under scrutiny clearly reflects the ebbs and flows experienced by imperial Byzantium: after the Fourth Crusade, its political control over large swaths of territories was basically non-existent, and other polities became major players in the regions formerly under Constantinopolitan sway; nevertheless, it must be emphasized that regardless of the variegated and changeable forms of Byzantine urbanism, cities *always* remained the foci of political and social attention on the part of both secular and religious authorities and furthermore the center of the economic interests of local landowning elites. I am positive that the transformation experienced by the Byzantine urban landscape in the six centuries under scrutiny here can afford us a better grasp of changes to the Byzantine central and provincial administrative apparatus: the fiscal machinery, military institutions, socio-economic structures, and religious organization. Indeed, and echoing Stravinsky, we should remember that the principle of the endless melody (urbanism) is the perpetual becoming of a music (played by the state, its elites, and its populations) that never had any reason for starting, any more than it has any reason for ending.

Notes

1. It is interesting to notice that in 1937–8 Stravinsky composed the famous Concerto in E-Flat "Dumbarton Oaks" commissioned by Robert and Mildred Bliss, who also established the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Research Library and Collection (today a trustee of Harvard University).
2. A partial exception is represented by the city of Amorium which often resurfaces in the web as results of the support offered by the Metropolitan

Museum of New York to the archaeological excavation (https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/amor/hd_amor.htm retrieved 1 March, 2021).
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cities_in_the_Byzantine_Empire retrieved 1 March, 2021.
4. Biddle included twelve elements spanning from defense to market and street planning, from large dense population to complex religious structures: he identifies them as not equally important as only a few of them are enough to characterize a settlement as urban (Biddle 1976, 100). See also Wickham (2005, 592).
5. On the origins and development of the so-called thematic organization see Haldon (2016, 266–75); Zuckerman (2005) and Hendy (1985, 624–5) with further bibliography.
6. On the main roads and communication network the Arabs followed in pursuing their seasonal raiding tactics see Belke (2017); also, Whittow (1996, 25–36); Haldon (2016, 132–147).

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CHAPTER 2

The Historiography of Byzantine City: Interpretations, Methodology, and Sources

Abstract This chapter will be divided into two parts. The first one will try to propose a more nuanced and complex approach, as paired with its archaeological penchant to the traditional historiographical juxtaposition continuity vs. discontinuity which has been the unavailable starting point in any discourse on the Byzantine city. It will propose a more Mediterranean-based approach to the trajectories of Byzantine urbanism encompassing the fragmentation of the Great Sea post-Late Antiquity and reaching out to the eleventh and twelfth-century when Byzantine cities were deeply embedded in a flourishing Mediterranean economy. The second part will move from another supposed juxtaposition (*polis* vs. *kastron*) to examine the historiographical debate concerning the fate of urbanism in the period spanning between the Late Antiquity and the Fourth Crusade. It will also present the reader with the main methodological issues concerning material and literary sources essential to analyze regional trajectories of urban city-life and cityscape.

Keywords Historiography • Mediterranean • Ceramics • Coins • Lead-seals

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2.1 The Inertia of the "Roman Mediterranean" Ordinary: The Byzantine City in a Mediterranean Perspective

This section of the book will be mostly about the historiographical debate concerning the fate of urbanism in the period spanning between the Late Antiquity and the Fourth Crusade. As mentioned in the previous section this is a long period which is concluded between two crucial events in Byzantine history: the existential fight Byzantium put up against the Persian first (the so-called Last Great War of Antiquity lasting between 612 and 630) (Kaegi 2003, 58–190) and the Arabs a few years later (Kennedy 2008, 34–97) and the catastrophic sack of Constantinople by the hands of the Frank and the Venetian "crusaders" in 1204 (Angold 2003). One should immediately admit to the impossibility of providing the reader with a fully-fledged narrative of the historical events, socio-political outlook, and military vicissitudes which punctuate the period under scrutiny here. For this one should refer to the rather compelling overviews of Whittow (1996), Warren Treadgold (1997), Michael Angold (2001), Marcus Rautman (2006), Angeliki Laiou and Cecile Morrisson (2007), Judith Herrin (2008), Timothy Gregory (2010), and Sarris (2015), as well as those works focusing on shorter and more coherent periods of Byzantine history; the latter include but are not limited to the recent contributions of John Haldon (2016) on the seventh and eighth century, Christie (2016) and Decker (2016) on the archaeology of the Dark Ages, Leslie Brubaker and Haldon (2011) on the Iconoclastic Era, Antony Kaldellis (2017) on the tenth and eleventh century, and Paul Magdalino (1993) on the Komnenian Era.

The aforesaid list is obviously selective and does not take into considerations both contributions which focused on specific regions of the Empire: like Curta's (2006) and Paul Stephenson's (2010) volumes on the history and archaeology of the Balkans (within and beyond the Byzantine rule), Zanini (1998) and Cosentino (2008, 2021) on Byzantine Italy, Anna Avramea (1997) on the Peloponnese until the eighth century, and Niewöhner (2017a, b) on the archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia. Moreover, it is glossing over the notable collaborative efforts often under the headings of Encyclopedias and/or Companions like the aforementioned *Oxford History of Byzantium* (Mango 2001), the *Economic History of Byzantium* (Laiou 2002), the *Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (Shepard 2009), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*

(Cormack et al. 2008), *The Byzantine World* (Stephenson 2010), the *Companion to Byzantium* (James 2010) or the *Brill Companion to Byzantine Italy* (Cosentino 2021) as well as the more general *Brill Companion to Byzantine History* (Brandes 2021).

One should also consider here other and more recent contributions which encapsulate Byzantium within Mediterranean history at large (Horden and Kinoshita 2014; Wickham 2009; Slootjes and Verhoeven 2019). As Averil Cameron (2014, 44–5) states: "the imperial reach of Byzantium was wide, stretching all around the Mediterranean, to the east and Islamic world, and to the north and to the Caucasus. Its rule and its influence were exercised militarily, diplomatically, politically, and economically." As partially mentioned, a rather Mediterranean perspective in terms of urbanism and its development will be adopted in this book, reaching out to regions which, although nominally under the Byzantine sway, followed local socio-political and administrative trajectories which interacted with or reflected by those experienced by the so-called Byzantine heartland. The story of Byzantine urbanism is as Mediterranean history, to begin with. The Roman economic system of exchange, city-level aristocracy and peasant society, and above all, the form of the state and political-power structures were geographically based upon a unified Mediterranean (Wickham 2005).

In terms of urbanism, we can relate to what Loseby has described as the economic and cultural/heritage contexts (although within large regional and local variations) common to the cities of the Mediterranean world. "Despite their boundless diversity, the majority of Mediterranean cities did share some basic similarities, in both political organization and physical appearance, that allow them to be treated as an analytical category. What is more, their superficial homogeneity in those respects had increased over time" (Loseby 2009, 141). In this light, one cannot but agree with Dey (2015, 129) when he traces the symbolic relevance and ideological centrality of the urban essence expressed by the porticoed streets and the monumental topography in the after-life of the Roman city across the early Medieval Mediterranean.

As a result, it is important to consider this essence and its rather univocal monumental, spatial and functional embodiments as the by-product of an exceptional time: the creation of a large polity which for the first and only time in history unified the entire Mediterranean basin. There is no better way of realizing the truth of the latter assertion than looking at the fifth-century Tabula Peutingeriana, possibly a copy of a former Roman

map of the Great Sea (Salway 2005), which shows the main stations of the so-called *cursus publicus* (the rapid public postal, diplomatic and courier service which in the Byzantine era will be known as ὁ δρόμος) (Haldon 2010, 52–3). It showed a complex hierarchical network of urban centers (metropolis, provincial capital, and minor cities alike), some of which illustrated as enthroned personifications.[1] In a less visual manner, the sixth-century *Synekdemos* of Hierocles Grammatikos (Hierocles, *Synekdemos*) also presents us a reliable guide to an Empire still centered on a political and administrative hierarchy of urban sites in the whole Mediterranean (Koder 1986, 157–8).

Such a geographically full-fledged and Mediterranean-scale representation of the urban phenomenon (as based on a univocal administrative rationale) did not survive the early seventh century, as shown by the (incomplete) *Descriptio Orbis Terrarum* of George of Cyprus. This compilation -although preserved in a ninth-century version- preserved secular administrative divisions including cities (the term polis seldom appears), *kastra, komai, klimata* and, seldom, *polichnai* (towns), islands, and harbors, as they all dot Africa, Egypt, Italy and the Oriens (Kazdhan 1991, 838). Later Byzantine compilatory works like the tenth century Constantine Porphyrogennetos' *De Thematibus* or *De Administrando Imperio* retained the ancient distribution of cities as entities unifying the Mediterranean although the political, military, and economic reality bespoke of an irredeemable fragmentation.

As a result, one needs to factor in a totally different sociopolitical and economic outlook of the post-sixth century the Mediterranean as a fragmented set of exchange networks even if comprised in an overarching fiscal, administrative, military state-system which has been characterized as possessing a homogeneous Christian Roman identity (Haldon 2016, 110). In this light, it is important to consider what Horden and Purcell (2020, 137) have identified as the main variables in gauging the socio-economic nature of the Mediterranean: connectivity, unity between structurally similar micro-ecologies, and distinctiveness. These allow the two scholars to weigh in the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean micro-regions as well the permeability of what Pirenne (1957) famously described as the Mediterranean divide. As McCormick (2014, xiv) remarks, the Pirenne's "thesis" stirred "a new debate about the end of antiquity [which] elicited distinguished responses that illuminated developments far beyond medieval Europe […] as Byzantinists and others debated the continuity, changes, or even survival of ancient-style cities in Byzantium."

Indeed, considering the transitional period as a bearer of change in Mediterranean urban at large is one thing; interpreting it as a reorganization of the urban environment in generic terms of decline and contraction is another. In fact, the Late Antique period was already one of drastic change for the Classical city. It involved an all-encompassing array of occurrences: political change, militarization/fortification, Christianization, ruralization, and abandonment manifesting at varying speeds and to different extents across the former Mare Nostrum (Grig 2013, 557; Lavan 2003, 2021). However, as the changes at urban institutional and governmental level and those concerning the physical appearance of Roman cities have in the past determined a value judgement linking them with decline. This conclusion should be avoided as it was simply a development from one type of urbanism to another (Whittow 1996, 58).

In this light, the recent round table entitled the *Byzantine City and the archaeology of the Third Millennium* hosted by Zanini (2016), Ivaniševiç (2016), Crow (2016), and Quiroga (2016) at the 23rd International Byzantine Congress, could be regarded as having put to rest the long-standing historiographic debate that since the 1950s has characterized the fate of Classical cities after Late Antiquity. The contributions in questions have the great merit of reassessing the failure and decline of classical urbanism as a recurring feature and not something specific to the Late Antique period (Potter 1995; Rich 1996; Spieser 2001); this by encouraging us to adopt a Mediterranean perspective when interpreting the different reactions from urban communities and acknowledging a wide array of different challenges in diverse circumstances (Jacobs 2019). They placed changes to the Greek-Roman city in a sort of *longue durée* which allow us to turn urban landscape histories into narratives of long-term transformation (Crow 2016, 67; 142).

This approach is based on an archaeological method that moves away from the cause-correlation slant repeatedly envisioned by Foss for Asia Minor (1977b). It is not by chance that a panel on (early) Byzantine cities included Byzantine archaeologists in charge of urban projects (like Justiniana Prima and Gortyn), which have helped to change the perception of the Byzantine city and its transformation both in geographical (with the inclusions of regions other than the Byzantine heartland) and chronological terms. The latter allows us to propose a better and extended internal chronology of the urban phenomenon, which in a sense transcends the political and military crisis of the seventh century. As Zanini (2016, 138–9) remarks: "in early Byzantine cities of the seventh and

eighth century, people carried on their lives much longer and better than we could imagine just fifteen years ago […] some urban centers survived better than other cities, who paid a heavier tribute to the crisis. Within the cities, some social classes preserved their status and invested much of their money in self-representation […]; in this way, they [also] preserved some forms of economic circulation within the cities and between them and the major directive centers of the empire."

This does not imply that cities did not suffer from the disorder in the Mediterranean interregional system of exchange in particular after the demise of the Egyptian tax-spine in 640 s (Wickham 2005, 789–90); or that that the Mediterranean did not become an economically fragmented, politically conflictual, religiously divided and culturally disputed space at the turn of the eighth century (Lysen Hansen and Wickham 2000). Rather it is important to acknowledge how the existence of coherent regional systems and networks of production, distribution, and circulation of goods (as reflected by material culture) coaxed other factors (social, cultural, and political) in molding the transformation of cities. In other words, the focus of our attention should be the role played by the central and local administration, a defensive system planned at imperial scale but locally executed and adapted, and the Church as they all shaped the dynamics between local micro-ecology (including the hinterland of each city) and the macro-economy on a Mediterranean scale (Zanini 2016, 140).

Such a nuanced and more complex approach, as paired with its archaeological penchant, has, therefore, the merit of replacing a uniform concept of decline with the idea that "societies deal with continuity and change through the construction of adaptive strategies, which have the effect of transforming and re-equipping existing social structure to deal with new realities." (Walmsley 2007, 147). This is particularly important when one projects such an approach against the backcloth of the historiographical juxtaposition continuity vs. discontinuity. This remains the unavailable starting point in any discourse on the Byzantine city. On the one hand, it is true that this bipolar paradigm has been labeled as false and regarded as simply unproductive to any efforts to analyze the causes and effects of the transition of urban sites in terms of social structures, planning, and fabric (Dagron 2002, 397). Here one should consider two important points. The first has to do with the ideological charge of the decline of the term, for it is regarded as a way of asserting the superiority of Roman culture over that of the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Tsigonaki 2012, 74). Incidentally, this conclusion seems remarkably in tune with the recent

historiographical drive meant to promote new, post-colonial, and post-imperialist critical approaches to the Byzantine world.[2] Second, as one should recognize that continuity is always present in any sphere of human activity, superficial concept of decline can only deter a full consideration of urban change and renewal (Cormack 1990, 38; Haldon 2006, 608). In this sense, we are at risk of projecting notions of decline into the past by arbitrarily setting a peak of urbanism in the post-third century crisis period (Eger 2013, 134).

On the other hand, and notwithstanding the caveats and reassessments recently proposed, the discontinuity vs. continuity debate has been reverberating across all the contributions on Byzantine urbanism offered by historians and archaeologists alike in the past seventy years. In this light, we can single out two casualties of this long-standing cross-fire as focusing mainly on the Dark Ages urbanism of Byzantium; the first is -as already mentioned in the previous chapter- the lack of a clear definition of the Byzantine (Medieval) city and the inability on the part of the Byzantinists to embrace the real Byzantine towns and the challenges historical and archaeological record presents to the research on Byzantine urbanism (Tzvikis 2020, 333–4). Indeed, Curta (2016, 96) has criticized the tendency on the part of Byzantinists to simply dismiss ancient cities which continued to exist in the Dark Ages as residual exceptions or anomalies; whereas again, Tzvikis (2020, 328) has identified the inescapable historiographic temptation of chasing literary shadows and the narrated imaginary cities as reflections of the one capital.

As a result, and this is the second historiographical fatality, most of the secondary literature available on the issue of Byzantine urbanism and its development seldom pierce through the ninth century. This not to deny that -as partially mentioned- when dealing with ninth-to-twelfth century timespan, regionally-based studies incorporating chapters on Byzantine urbanism and its trajectories have not been produced; or to gloss over contribution which delved into the economic and social aspects of Byzantine cities in the very same period (Hendy 1985, 68–138; Dagron 2002, 402–5; Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 130–3; Cheynet 2017; Howard-Johnston 2019); or, finally, to ignore the chapter-like or monographic volumes centered on single Middle Byzantine urban sites.[3]

Rather, in my opinion, one should point to an idiosyncratic discrepancy. Indeed, as the ninth century on has been regarded as a watershed of urban life (Ousterhout 2019, 333–4) and the centuries afterward (in particular the tenth and eleventh) witnessed a wave of accelerated economic

growth mainly reflected by the revival of urbanism, there has been but a few attempts to provide a complete and coherent overview of the Byzantine urban epiphenomenon post-Dark Ages (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 46–9).[4] This is a quite peculiar gap, especially in light of the score of the literary, documentary, and archival sources as well as urban archaeology and material evidence (mainly coins, seals, and pottery) (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 115–30).

For instance, a good example of the possibilities offered by the latter typology of sources is offered by a recent contribution of Claudia Sode (2018), who convincingly delved into the issue of Byzantine city self-identity through the analysis of tenth century sigillographic evidence. She persuasively asserts that the lack of scholarly interest in the formation and existence of civic identity in the post-Dark ages Byzantine city has to do with the abovementioned Constantinopolitan view-point and self-conception of authors of literary and historical texts as they belonged predominantly to the literary elite of the empire (Sode 2018, 151). Moreover, she concludes that although Byzantine cities never fully developed into self-governing communities like in Western Europe or Italy, lead-seals from the tenth century onwards provide us with a window into a sense of local urban self-confidence as often associated with the Church, monastic institutions, and saints. As will be seen, the latter point is exemplified, for instance, by the Confraternity of the Holy Virgin established in Thebes by some refugees from Naupaktos in the mid-eleventh century (Angold 1985, 17–8; Curta 2006, 277).

Sode's contribution also touches upon (however only tangentially) one of the most debated issues concerning the urban expansion for the period between the tenth and the twelfth century when the Byzantine economy seems mainly focusing on the Aegean Sea (Harvey 1989, 222–23; Magdalino 1993, 144–8; Armstrong 2020). This has to do with the importance of trade in the growth of Middle Byzantine cities and the role played by western merchants as opposed to landowning elites in the rise and development of urban centers like Athens, Thessalonike, Corinth, and Thebes. This, in turn, has lead Shea (2009, 301) to question the political and institutional development of the Byzantine cities as not just another factor in the traditional view of a declining empire but rather as part of the vital, increasingly unified, urban culture of the Mediterranean.

Shea's conclusion can be interpreted both as an invitation to return to a Mediterranean approach to the issues of Byzantine urbanism. In this sense, the comparison with Italian merchant city-states is illuminating, for

eleventh and twelfth-century Byzantine cities were deeply embedded in a flourishing Mediterranean economy. The latter owed mainly a remarkable demographic growth which led to a development of agricultural production and a boost in the volume and value of Byzantine trade with Fatimid Egypt from the late tenth century on (Lefort 2002, 271–275; Jacoby 2017, 639–40). These were all essential preconditions and causative factors in the upsurge of artisanal and commercial activities which affected and impinged upon the urban fabric, landscape, and structures of cities like Thebes, Corinth, and Athens as well as Monemvasia, Lakedaemonia-Sparta, Arta, and of course Thessalonike. In fact, we are confronted with a surge of urban-centered secondary production as city-based manufacturing and commercial activities re-shaped the city in terms of planning and spatial function. Once again, we are reminded of the importance of the changes experienced by the exchange systems on a Mediterranean scale as they impacted and guided the trajectory of Byzantine urbanism.

In fact, although the state continued to play a central role in the internal development of the urban economy, its decentralization brought about a progressive decentralization of the demand leading to the establishment of provincial networks less dependent on the Constantinopolitan pull (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 132). So not only ninth-to-twelfth century Byzantine cities became increasingly prone to accommodate structures of production (as shown by the workshops excavated in Corinth and Thebes), but the cash available to urban-based landlords also swelled. More importantly, it was the moral and social environment that came to existence in Byzantium which reveals similarities to that from which Italian townsmen emerged to dominate the economy of the Mediterranean world 'in the name of God and of good profit' (Magdalino 1993, 159). In this light, and as a conclusive remark to this section, one cannot in the end help but pose a few counterfactual questions: what if Byzantine cities (at least in Greece) did develop along the autonomous political-administrative lines of the Italian-city states? What if the Fourth Crusade had not been diverted to Constantinople leading to the economic colonization of the Aegean on the part of the Venetians, the Genoese, and the Franks? Maybe, as will be seen, the answer to these questions can be found in centers like Monemvasia (or Cherson) as well as Attaleia for their political, administrative, social, and of course, economic functions -as will be seen- betray a coastal/peripheral -and therefore "Mediterranean" type of Byzantine urban development capable of successfully piercing through the watershed of the ninth century.

2.2 Sources and Historiography of Byzantine Urbanism between *Polis* and *Kastron*

As already repeatedly referred to, polis and kastron have been the *noms de plume* used by Byzantine historiography to characterize the passage from two definite and oppositional typologies, ideas, and ideals of urbanism (Haldon 2010, 77–81). On the one hand, the classical Greco-Roman city with its heavily politicized landscape and ideology (Favro 2008). The latter was embodied by the regular planning, monumental architectures and the large public spaces (streets and agora alike) (Hartnett 2017); it was characterized by the unity between the center and its well-governed chora (Dey 2015, 2); finally, it was expressed by a literary education and cultural ethics in amenities like theaters, gymnasia, and baths (Ward Perkins 2008, 377). On the other hand, as Dunn (1994, 78) concludes, "a settlement differentiated from the majority as an administrative and military center, fortified of course, but not to be confused with lesser fortifications. The term [as used by Byzantine sources] probably also reflected the disappearance of the civic level of administration, and so of certain uses of the term *polis*"*;* moreover, even the role of the Church and bishopric should be label as simply "another way of distinguishing a *kastron* from a mere fortification."

In fact, Dunn himself encourages to see the juxtaposition *polis* vs. *kastron* as happening at different moments in the Balkans (already in the fifth century) and in Anatolia, with the former region being a sort of model for the latter. In the Balkans, relatively small-fortified centers developed already in Late Antiquity as better serving the needs of the state, although sometimes acquiring the legal status of *polis*; in Anatolia, the loss of urban characteristics happened not earlier than the seventh century when the Greek sources increasingly adopt the term *kastron* (Dunn 1994, 77–8).

Indeed, *polis* and *kastron* continuously resurfaced in the historiography of Byzantine urbanism post-seventh century. On the one hand, the call involved issues of religious or civic identity for either the inhabitants of smaller and diminished settlement surrounded by walls providing shelter in case of attack regarded themselves as belonging to a former *polis* (Haldon 1999, 15–16) or the presence of a local bishop (as documented by the lists of signatures to the Ecumenical Councils or the Notitiae Episcopatuum encouraged the continuous use of *polis* even when archaeology documented they cities in question were either abandoned or indeed turned into fortresses) (Brandes 1999, 41–2).[5] Nevertheless, the term

kastron did not connotate an urban settlement, but rather a walled administrative and military center, as the presence of the bishop can often help to distinguish it from a lesser fortification (Dunn 1994, 78).

Nevertheless, any attempt to draw clear conclusions on the survival of cities as simply based on the representations of city-based bishops and metropolitans (Roussel 1986, 143) at Ecumenical Councils (like the so-called *Quinixestum* in 691–2 or the Council of Nicaea II in 787) should be regarded as preposterous. In this light, Brandes (1999, 42) points out the importance of the historical context for "the higher number of participants to the *Quinixestum* probably due to the effects of internal disputes within the Church [as indeed] the designation of episcopal seats as an idiosyncrasy of language used by the Church telling nothing about the nature of settlement."

This does not imply that local urban identity was not centered around the saint's cult as performed and promoted by local bishops and clergy (Whittow 1996, 129). In fact, since the Justinian period, ecclesiastical authorities played a central role in the bureaucratic, administrative and political structures of governance of the cities (Brandes 1999, 29). Indeed, if the Late Roman *polis* was a term inferring a settlement with precise ideological, juridical and institutional characters, later these were associated with the presence of bishops (Haldon 1999, 3). The influence of the Church and the role played by the Bishop on urban issues ranged from collection and redistribution of fiscal revenues to the resolution of legal disputes and the care for the poor, the sick, and strangers as well as public buildings (Ivison 2001, 18). As Trombley (1993) and Liebeschuetz (2001, 157–98) effectively conclude, the rise of the political and economic role of the bishop in the city harkens back to the changing nature of the urban elites in the fifth and sixth century with the disappearance of the self-autonomous urban *curiae* as the city was the basic unit of the Church hierarchy (Louth 2009, 100–2). The role of the bishops in urban, secular affairs was indeed fully acknowledged already by Emperor Zeno in 480 s and later in Justinian's legislation as exemplified by a *costitutio* (edict) issued in 545, which asserts the rising of a new informal hierarchy (Avramea 1979, 284). "The most holy bishop of the diocese, the principal citizens, and the owners of property shall appoint the curator of the city, the officials charged with the replenishment of the public granaries, and other administrators of this kind." (*Novellae*, 128, XVI).

However, as one cannot immediately equate the presence of a bishop (as enhanced by their signatures on the acts of the Ecumenical Councils)

to urban life. It is important here to acknowledge that when they physically resided in a city, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy actively contributed to the economic resilience of urban sites: the local Church was often one of the major landowners and actively underpinned demand in terms of artisanal and commercial activities, the continuous architectural interventions in the urban fabric, and the maintenance of a network of sacred (public) spaces and urban planning (Buchwald 2007, 59–66; Vionis 2017, 141–5). The latter centered around new cathedrals, funerary churches, and martyrial architectures, which turned into essential city landmarks (on a par with fortifications or colonnaded streets) (Caseau 1999, 55–7). New ecclesiastical constructions clearly betrayed a new pattern of wealth investment and cultural values on the part of the bishop, the clergy as well as secular elites (Brown 2012). Morover, one should factor in the "visible" changes in the monumental landscape as sponsored and promoted by urban elites, mostly bishops, for they promoted the "invisibility of other buildings and structures where daily activities of local inhabitants took place." (Quiroga 2016, 74).

Here it is also important to notice that the foundation of urban ecclesiastical buildings between the late fourth and well into the sixth century -as sometimes even involved the conversion of Pagan temples (like in the case of Athens, Aphrodisias in Caria and Syracuse)- led to the creation of a new urban aesthetic as exemplified by the use of ancient spolia in both churches and city-walls (Saradi 1997; Bakirtzis 2010). In fact, the abundance of use of spolia on two functionally different typologies of buildings seems to point to a sheer pragmatic decision on the part of local or imperial authorities as they were supposedly forced to hastily erect fortified enceintes vis-à-vis external threats. In truth, the reuse reliefs, carvings, and decorative architectures from spoliated Classical and Late Antique buildings betrayed a variety of ideological connotations as well as cultural symbolism and apotropaic meanings (Ward-Perkins 1999).

The latter should be considered here as they should be paired (in particular from the sixth century on) with the importance and presence of the patron saints as legitimizing authority and epitome of the very existence of the city. In other words, and as clearly visible in Ancyra, Attaleia, Nicaea, Amastris, Patara, and Thessalonike, where Byzantine walls still stand, spolia were strategically and carefully positioned where they could be better viewed or noticed. They could remind the bystander of the patronage of locals or imperial authorities, like in Ancyra where a long inscription of Michael III commemorated the mid-ninth century restoration of the walls

(Foss 1977b, 78–9) or those embellishing the walls of Attaleia celebrating Emperor Leo VI (886–912) as taking care even of his most distant subjects (Krallis 2019, 60). More important, however, and as clearly signified by the famous seventh-century mosaic panel in the church of Saint Demetrios of Thessalonike (see Fig. 2.1) representing the Saint as embracing the Patriarch and the Eparch (as donors of the ecclesiastical building) in front of the city walls, we are confronted with the emergence of a new conceptualization of the city from the seventh century on. It reveals an increasing need for fortification and security (Bakirtzis 2005, 26–27). This should be fulfilled practically by impregnable and potent walls embellished

Fig. 2.1 Mosaic of Saint Demetrios (late seventh century) with the Bishop of Thessaloniki and the Eparch Leo, in front of the city walls. Saint Demetrios Church, Thessaloniki

by the classical spolia, which should be regarded as the catalyst of a resilient urban identity and conveyor of an apotropaic message of protection which developed and completed in the presence of a supernatural protector.

So, we are encouraged to see the emergence of fortifications in Byzantine city centers not simply as a passive response to the military challenges of the sixth and seventh century, or else as an abrupt and intense disruption of city life, but rather as the product of a dynamic and multifaceted transformation of the urban entity at an ideological as well as functional level. Indeed, as Crow (2017, 98–9) remarks: “a simple binary distinction between a former lively *polis* and a fortified core is not helpful in defining and exploring the diversity of physical, demographical, and societal changes to urban and non-urban settlements between the early and late Byzantine period.”

In fact, the pragmatic use and ideological meaning of spolia could be combined with other types of primary and material sources to dispel the idea that fortifications were simply signifying a pattern of demographic and economic collapse, incontrollable insecurity, shrinkage of the urban fabric, and/or abandonment of urban sites. Spolia, as often embedded in residential structures, commercial shops, and artisanal workshops encroaching onto public streets, could be paired with ceramic and numismatic evidence to picture the occupation and appropriation of public spaces as not stemming from the collapse of urban administrative and political structures of governance (Jones 1964). This has clearly been shown for sixth to eighth-century cities in Syria and Palestine as Kennedy (1985) and more recently Walmsley (2007), Holum (2011), and Avni (2011) have concluded that the changing appearance, planning, and cityscape of urban centers like Jerash, Schythopolis-Beit She’an, Pella, Caesarea Maritima, and Jerusalem were unrelated to political events and connected to the smooth economic and social transitional processes. Although with regional variabilities and peculiar trajectories -like the unique example of the eighth-century city-like site of Anjar (in Lebanon), built and conceived by the Umayyad Caliphs as a showcase of late antique palatial urbanism (Leal 2017)- we are confronted with urban environments which were economically vital and less interested in monumental architecture and planning (Wickham 2005, 619). Therefore, what we are focusing on it is not at haphazard and chaotic appropriation of parts of an urban landscape, but an all-encompassing development (Ward-Perkins 1999, 243).

This development could be traced and seen in different typologies of sources. For instance, we can consider the image of the city as offered by literary sources like hagiographies. They have been extensively examined by Saradi (2006, 2012, 2014) as their importance for understanding Byzantine society, politics, and economy at large has been summarized by Stephanos Efthymiades (2011). First and foremost, hagiographies provide us with invaluable information on urban institutions, landscape, everyday life and as well as social and economic activities. For instance, the heroic figure of the saints whose triumphs over evil and miracles were remembered and deeply woven in the urban landscape and fabric through the building of churches and performance of commemorative processions (Saradi 2014, 422).

Second, hagiographical literature makes almost no distinction between a *polis* and other types of settlements (Haldon 1999, 14). One should nevertheless consider the important social function of this literary genre within urban life rather than using hagiographies to draw any conclusion on the exact definition and role of a city within the administrative, economic, religious, and political hierarchy of settlement. On the one hand, the vocabulary and style of the genre (often punctuated by stereotypical and rhetorical images) aim at promoting an urban space construed around the memory (ceremonial or physical) of miracles and relics, surrounded by the protective mantle of the saint (often physically overlapping with the fortified set of walls on which a saint himself is often miraculously seen in a time of despair) and marked by the presence of ecclesiastical buildings as characterizing the skyline of the city (Saradi 2014).

On the other hand, and paradoxically as it may seem, it is, however, possible to use hagiographies in order to trace an idea and image of the city, which sometimes resurfaces in the archaeological reality even if *a contrario*. For instance, the seventh-to-ninth century lives of saints exalted the Christian space of the city and the heroic role of the patron saint as protector; this seems to go hand in hand with the increased importance acquired by the well-built circuit of walls in many of the abovementioned cities. However, and moving to the Middle Byzantine period, the tenth century works of Symeon Metaphrastes -who re-wrote many earlier hagiographies (Høgel 2014, 185–9) – reflect the increasing role of Constantinople as a heavenly city and insist upon the rural and pastoral world as the most appropriate as a place for the saints to pursue their ascetic lifestyle (Savage 2019). As Saradi (2014, 42) concludes “the image of the city unfolds differently; [when describing the urban society and

landscape] hagiographies concentrate on the palace and the Church, the oikoi, their household slaves; the private sphere is the environment where many holy men and women attained sanctity". In this sense, archaeology and material culture are telling us a rather different story for provincial cities like Thebes, Athens, and Butrint (on a par with thematic capitals like Amorium and Corinth) betrayed a bustling economic life as an administrative and political center like Thessalonike experienced a public and complex development of its political life with a dialogue between local elites (archontes), imperial and religious authorities and crafts and occupational associations (Shea 2009, 290–302).

In this light, as it will be seen, urban archaeology and the analysis of coins, seals, and, above all, pottery should be used when re-assessing the narrative proposed by hagiographic as well as literary sources. The latter have been cogently examined by Alexander Kazdhan (1998). He presented us with a short, but exhaustive overview (or, as he calls it, a semi-statistical analysis) of the terminology adopted eighth-to-tenth century Byzantine primary sources to define and describe urban sites. Kazdhan concludes that the ninth-century Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor and the *Breviarium* of Patriarch Nikephoros (Mango 1990) seem to mirror a change of the urban perception and image of the city as it developed from the seventh century onwards, for it seems that the stronghold was the main form of urban settlement in Byzantium. Theophanes and Nikephoros both aimed at creating or elaborating a specific term to define a settlement differing from the *polis* and hierarchically of a lower rank: it was *kastron* in Theophanes and *polisma* and *phrourion* in Nikephoros (Kazdhan 1998, 350). The picture offered by tenth-century authors like Constantine Porphyrogennetos (*De Thematibus*), Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone and Signes Codoñer 2015) is however different as there is no consistency in the use of terms like *asty* (loosely translated as town) and *polis* (as already seen in the Life of Theodore the Recruiter with regard to Euchaita); the tenth-century terminology is not uniform as different designations are sometimes given to the same settlement (Kazdhan 1998, 355).

In a rather similar vein, eleventh-century Byzantine historical sources like the *Synopsis* of John Skylitzes (Wortley 2010) and its *continuatio* (McGeer and Nesbitt 2019) and even twelfth-century city enkomia (a genre which will become very common in the Late Byzantine period (Akışık 2011) confronted us with a comparable variety of definitions which leaves puzzled about the real nature, as well as perception and

image of urban or urban-like settlement. One is, for instance, left wondering what the reality behind definitions like *astykome* and *agropolis* was since they are translated as country town and rural city, or *polin romaikè* (as referred to Mantzikert) (McGeer and Nesbitt 2019, 115). There is no space here to provide the reader with a full and detailed overview of all diverse typologies of literary and documentary sources for the sixth-century period under scrutiny in the book. A range that encompasses the already mentioned acts of the Ecumenical Councils, chronicles, histories, and hagiographies but also includes poetry, handbooks, panegyrics/encomia, and epistolography (Haarer 2010; Hörander et al. 2019). It suffices to say that that personal and Constantinopolitan-centered points of view, rhetoricism, linguistic archaism, and cultural statements as embedded in the deliberate citations and use of Classical and Homeric literature all marred a meaningful and realistic interpretation of the urban terminology used by Byzantine literary authors (Whittow 1996, 1–14).

In light of the limitations offered by the diverse typology of literary sources, it is therefore essential to rely as much as possible on the contribution of urban archaeology (and material culture) to counter what Tzvikis (2020, 328) defines as the "multiplicity and unpredictability of this literary universe [that is] the narrated imaginary cities corresponding to the countless cities of the empire as reflections of the one capital." Here, we are finally delving into full the debate I repeatedly referred to in the previous sections of the book.

In fact, and as partially hinted at, the origins of this debate on Byzantine cities harken back to the argument set forth by Kazhdan in his article entitled *Vizantiiskie goroda v VII-IX vv.* and published in 1954. Curta (2016, 89–92) has authoritatively framed Kazdhan's interpretative argument (and his use of numismatic and literary evidence) as rooted in the association between the disappearance of the slave mode of production, the ruralization of (Byzantine) cities post-sixth century, and their resurgence under the aegis of a new (feudal) socio-economic system. Ernst Kirsten (1958) confirmed the picture drawn by Kazdhan, as the former in particular had the merit to propose a diachronic overview of the Byzantine city spanning the whole Byzantine millennium. Moreover, Kirsten used a wide array of literary sources as paired with architecture and artistic (from mosaic to manuscript illuminations) evidence to explore the regional trajectories of Byzantine urbanism. His conclusions make him a kind of precursor of the *polis*-to-*kastron* interpretative framework. Thus, apart from the few representations on illuminations or the information provided by

mosaics and frescoes, only the monumental ruins of fortifications remain as evidence of the appearance of the cities and castra of our era.[6] (Kirsten 1958, 32).

It took five years for a direct response to Kazdhan's argument to emerge. In 1959 Georg Ostrogorsky -a prominent Serbian Byzantinist- wrote a compelling article that appeared in the prestigious *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* journal. As Kazdhan had used the progressive fading of coins to point to the vanishing of the classical *polis,* Ostrogorsky argued that the decrease in the seventh and eighth-century coinage was limited to bronze and that it did not affect the gold specimens issued in the same period. Moreover, he stressed the importance of the lists of bishoprics for the ecclesiastical organization was based on the Imperial administrative one, which in turn was centered on the city, the *polis* (Ostrogorsky 1959, 52).

The dice was cast. Indeed, and for at least three decades, any further contributions on the topic of Byzantine urbanism de facto helped to bolster the historiographical barricade separating the so-called "continuists" (who stressed that cities did survive physically; that, while they may have shrunk and often have been confined to their citadels as a result of constant enemy harassment, they nevertheless retained their role as centers of commercial activity, petty commodity production, and administration) from the "discontinuists" (who argued for a total collapse of the antique urban organization, and of social and economic life). One could mention Spyros Vryonis Jr., who, although commenting only on the fate of Byzantine cities of Anatolia, dismissed the numismatic evidence used by Kazdhan as simply worthless and implying that urban society had not disappeared in the period seventh-to-ninth century (Vryonis Jr. 1964, 124–26). Although a far cry from Vryonis, Dietrich Claude (1969) also lamented a use of material culture limited to coins (and occasionally inscriptions which rarified from the sixth century onwards) and advocated for the need for more extensive archaeological excavations to allow some conclusions on the topography and historical fate of cities like Carthage, Alexandria, Thessalonike, Athens, and Ephesos (as well as Constantinople) (Claude 1969, 4–6).

The invocation for urban archaeology was indeed received in the 1970s by Clive Foss. In fact, his extensive publication record reveals the first methodological attempt to pair excavations with literary and documentary sources in order to shed better light on the fate of the post-Classical city. Although scholars have since then stressed the imbalances of this methodological pairing (Brandes 1999, 35–6), one cannot but acknowledge Foss'

works as a sort of watershed on the topic of Byzantine urbanism. Like Vryonis, Foss's monographic studies centered on some of the most important cities in Byzantine Anatolia: Ancyra (Foss 1977a), Ephesos (Foss 1979), Sardis (Foss 1980), and Nicaea (see Fig. 2.2) (Foss and Tulchin 1996). Foss (together with David Winfield) also delved into the "castralization" of Byzantine cities as well, by surveying, comparing, and dating (based on architectural style, masonry, and building techniques) a large array of urban fortifications in Asia Minor regarded as the only real successor of the Late Antique *polis* (Foss and Winfield 1986).[7]

Regional variations aside, Foss has indeed always remained adamant to his original interpretation of archaeological material. Although he had the merit to investigate the fate of the abovementioned Anatolian cities well into the Ottoman period, his conclusions have been inescapably catastrophic when it comes to the post- Late Antique period. This can be shown by examining the conclusions he draws in two of his works as separated by a twenty-year timespan. First, his seminal article entitled

Fig. 2.2 Nicaea, city walls (fifth to thirteenth century)

Archaeology and the Twenty Cities of Asia appeared in 1977. In this survey of the main excavated (by then) cities of Anatolia (Pergamon, Ephesos, Miletus, Sardis, and Priene), Foss stated that "the great change took place in the Dark Ages, during the Persian and Arab invasions, no doubt aided by the devastating outbreaks of the plague under Justinian and Constantine V [...] urban life, upon which the classical Mediterranean culture had been based, was virtually at an end [in the seventh and eighth century]; one of the richest lands of classical civilization was now dominated by villages and fortresses" (Foss 1977b, 486). When examining urbanism in Pamphylia twenty years later, Foss's conclusions were rather similar. Indeed, Pamphylia was to be regarded as a microcosm of the whole empire where cities boomed in Late Antiquity only to dramatically shrink in the Dark Ages when fortified towns mushroomed (mainly due to repeated Arab naval raids), and only a big walled city (Attaleia) survived as administrative (as the capital of the Kybirrhaiotes theme) and trade center (Foss 1996a, 48–52).

As already mentioned, criticism to Foss came from different quarters. Dunn (1994, 68) has pointed to the contradiction of Foss's approach, which spells the fate of cities simply in terms of natural or man-made accidents. Roussel (1986, 140) has also warned against the danger of creating circular argumentation: if a theory starts as a speculation it cannot be transformed into a historical fact and used to date and identify archaeological data. He stressed that such a methodological flaw characterized the use of coin series by Foss. In another vicious circle, the latest pottery in any stratigraphy then is considered having a similar *terminus post quem* as when the coin sequence drops off so that ceramics found in identical circumstances at a different urban site were assigned a similar chronology (Roussel 1986, 141).

Here it is, indeed, important to briefly re-assess the role of coins and coinage in the assessment of urban trajectories. Although coins could tantalizingly be linked to material culture yielded in stratigraphically excavated contexts, their significance is bound to this association, for they may have remained in circulation for longer and even redeposited later (Sanders 2003, 386–77). Moreover, as Morrisson (2017, 76) cogently remarks: "coin finds can apparently not serve as quantitative indicators of settlement activity, but coin finds or the absence thereof [...] do indicate changes in monetization and the quality of economic transactions." By the same token, hoarding activities have been disproved as signs of the collapse of socio-economic life. In particular, in the case of the Balkans in the

seventh century and in Anatolia in the late eleventh century, hoards should rather point to concealment on the part of owners who lacked specialized institutions for deposit (Curta 2006, 95; Morrisson 2017, 81).

In a similar vein, we are tempted into looking at the lack of bronze coins in many Anatolian and Balkan sites as well as the curtailment of mints (limited to Constantinople, Syracuse, and partially Cherson as red herrings for a generalized collapse of urban life (Mango 1980, 69–72; Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 87). In fact, recent publications focusing on coin production and distribution in Sicily as well as research on monetary circulation in Cyprus, Crete, and Sardinia have shown that large islands remained the second most moneyed zone of the Empire after Constantinople (in particular with regard to copper coins) (Cosentino 2013, 71). Some excavated cities (like Amorium) also revealed an eighth-ninth century (relatively) high level of monetization (Lightfoot 2012). This not to deny that the Byzantine monetary system went through a drastic process of simplification resulting in the eighth- to tenth-century abridged structure based upon one denomination per metal: the gold nomisma, the silver *miliaresion,* and the copper follis (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 85); or to underestimate the fact that a revival in coinage seems to have appeared at different times from the ninth century on (earlier in the Aegean and later in Anatolia) with a dramatic increase in the late tenth/early eleventh century (Angold 1985, 7; Morrisson 2017, 79).

Rather one should rather embrace a more sophisticated approach that considers the role of the state (and the military) to maintain a fiscally monetized economy (Sarris 2010, 32; Haldon 2010, 83). Indeed, upon examining the finds of urban archaeological excavations in Anatolia, Hendy (1985, 640–6) concluded that the state and the army lay at the basis of (copper) coins disappearance in the so-called Dark Ages: it was the transferring of the major governmental object of expenditure from a form of wealth which it still did possess (land or), in place of a form which is no longer possessed in sufficient quantities (coins). In a rather mixed economy, where the institutional priorities, systemic needs, and ideological framework of the state were all paramount, most cities of the Byzantine heartland were, therefore, less in need of cash between the seventh and ninth century as opposed to the growth of economic (mainly urban-based) activities which demanded better monetary tools (reform of coinage and debasement) as well as coin production and distribution from the early tenth century onwards (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 147–55).

This brief reassessment of the importance of numismatic evidence for Byzantine urban studies reminds us of the importance of using material evidence when contextualizing the social, political, and economic trajectories of cities. In this light, we are also encouraged to look into a different typology of evidence which Foss did not have fully at his disposal. Ceramics have indeed emerged as the main marker of the scale and complexity of exchange networks which encompassed and centered on urban sites and the capital from the seventh century onwards. On the one hand, as urban archaeology progressed since the 1970s with the exploration of new sites (like Amorium, Euchaita, Butrint, Kastro Apalirou in Naxos, and Eleutherna in Crete) or the refinement of the previous publications and adoption of more stratigraphically (and recently environmentally) aware approach for ongoing urban excavations (at Ephesos, Corinth, Gortyn, and Pergamon) pottery has come to be recognized as the most common human-made find in archaeological excavations. As Wickham (2005, 702) states- "for pottery, we can discuss the organization of production, the distance moved by-products; and quantitative analyses of the full range of dated wares found on any given site can often tell us how much came from where in any given period." On the other hand, both John Hayes' pioneering studies culminating in the Constantinopolitan excavations at Saraçhane (Hayes 1992) and the extensive publication records on pottery yielded at several Byzantine urban sites (mainly Butrint, Comacchio, Lymira, Amorium, Ephesos, as well as Cyprus and the Aegean) have commanded a better understanding, dating, and cataloging of ceramic production and distribution within a settlement and between urban sites across regions and time-periods (Arthur 2007b, 2018; Armstrong 2020; Vroom 2017b; Vionis 2020; Gabrieli 2020).

As the typical range of pottery on any site spans between tablewares, cooking/kitchen wares, storage containers, and transport vessels (in particular, amphorae), it is important to set forth two methodological remarks (Wickham 2005, 703). The first has to do with the importance of overcoming a sheer quantitative approach to pottery assemblages as yielded in urban excavation; this in order to leave analytical room for examining the functionality of ceramics. Indeed, pottery is part of a complex sign system that comes from a distant past and does not permit univocal and constant decoding methods (Zanini 2009, 76). So, ceramics can be used to explore the relationship between people and material culture as they structure the changing social world (Randall 2014, 273).

In this sense, ceramics can be paired with zoo-archaeology and environmental studies as they allow us to delve into the changes into the dietary habits of urban (and rural population) and, as a consequence, gather invaluable information concerning the pattern of city-countryside socio-economic relationship, changes in transportation habits, and pattern of landownership as well as land-use and settlement pattern in general (McCormick 2012, 485–90; Dagron 2002, 446). One should not forget here that food, together with appearance, education, and participation in rituals, was one of the markers conveying and reiterating the dominance of Byzantine urban aristocracy (Grünbart 2013, 53). With this in mind, and as the Roman pottery tradition of highly standardized, massively produced, and uniformly distributed red wares came to an end, Arthur (2007a), Vroom (2008), and Decker (2016, 43–65) have analyzed both new pottery technology and types (like the Constantinopolitan Glazed White Wares, or the variety of painted wares locally produced across central and eastern Mediterranean and productive and distributive pattern) (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 74–6; Vroom 2017a, 178–83). On the one hand, they highlighted the importance of the post-seventh century changes as related to the end of the Mediterranean unity (Decker 2016, 65); on the other hand, they underscore the role of peculiar culinary and eating habits in the appearance of glazed chafing dishes (also known as *authepsae*) across wide areas of the Byzantine Mediterranean (Vroom 2017a, 177–8). Indeed, their wide circulation may reveal a link between use and available urban food resources both in terms of faunal reserves and edible crops (Arthur 2007a).

In tune with the second remark, I would like to make, one should also notice that these types of ceramics pair with the productive and distributive patterns of the so-called globular amphorae, a pure umbrella term for different typologies as made in different coastal and insular sites of the Byzantine koine between the seventh and tenth/eleventh century (Vroom 2018, 85–8). Recent research has indeed stressed the association of glazed and unglazed cooking/kitchen wares with this new family of containers (Arthur 2018, 281–2) which marked the coda of the large Late Antique amphora industry linked (although not exclusively) to the Constantinopolitan *Annona* tax-spine (Dark 2001, 38–40; Vroom 2017b, 296). They are described as perfect liquid containers for short and long distances and for local/regional distribution. This is because they were easy to handle during loading and unloading, often in simply equipped harbors (Vroom 2012, 374). As shipwrecks like those at Yassi Ada and

Bozburun (Vroom 2016, 160–1) as well as Tantura/Dor on the Palestinian coast (Creisher et al. 2019) and above all the recent Constantinopolitan excavations at Yenikapi have revealed, there seem to have existed a continuity in the use of low-status boats allowing coastal regions and islands to be supplied with goods (like oil and wine bottled in the abovementioned small-sized globular vessels) traveling alongside occasional passengers (Pulak 2018). We are indeed confronted with a cabotage movement of goods and people as well as an active interregional exchange between shipping networks (Vroom 2017a, 182).

In fact, a refined analysis of the production and distribution of containers have shed light on the economic resilience of urban sites like Ephesos (Vroom 2018), Cherson (Romančuk 2005, 111–23), Salamis-Constantia (Zavagno 2014), as well as Naples, Cagliari, Syracuse, and Catania (Arthur 2012a, b; Perra 2019; Cacciaguerra 2018). In particular, as it will be seen in the following chapter, the identification of seventh-to-ninth century Aegean amphora globular types in Ephesos (see Fig. 2.3) did imply the end of the economic importance of the local harbor as a hub for regional as well as for interregional long-distance trade networks (Vroom 2017a). Moreover, we should also mention here some later types of vessels like the so-called Gunsenin I/Saraçhane 54 or the recently identified "enigmatic" amphora (Vroom 2018), both circulating between the tenth and early

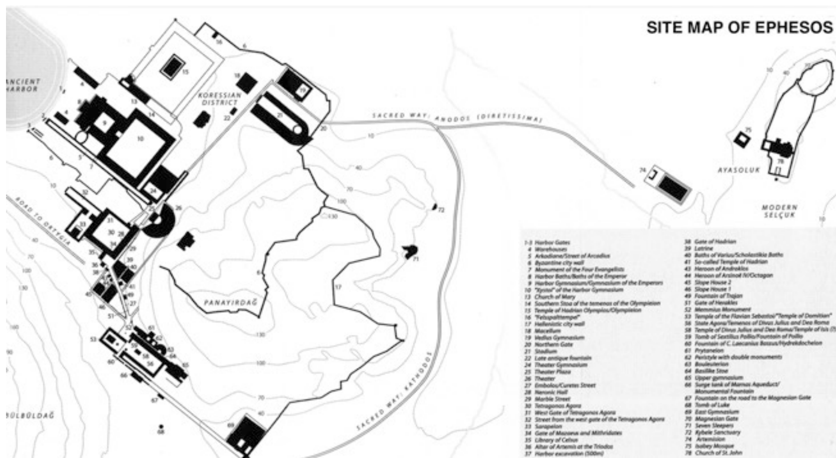

Fig. 2.3 Map of the city of Ephesos and its harbor

twelfth century. The former contained wine produced in the monastery of the Ganos region (along the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara), whereas the latter type was manufactured in Ephesos in a workshop probably centered around the famous Church dedicated to Saint Mary (where the Third Ecumenical Council was held in 431) (Vroom 2018, 89). Both typologies of amphorae point to a period of deregulation and market enterprise which actively involved the Church and the monastic institutions as following a period of time (the one from seventh to the ninth century) in which the Byzantine state, fiscality, and military (in particular the navy) had actively sustained and promoted a supply system actively relying on the abovementioned koine of coastal open-cities, gateway communities, and bunkers at the crossroads of different and interlocking economic zones (Wickham 2018; Shepard 2018).

The development of different analytical categories and refinement in the identification and dating of material evidence have allowed Byzantinists to come a long way since Foss for the methodologically intense dialogue between archaeologists and historians intensified over the past three decades. With this in mind, I would like now to return to the post-Foss historiography of Byzantine urbanism. Indeed, the issue of the end of the Classic city and its transformation in the Byzantine Medieval city took kept on preoccupying the minds of the Byzantine scholars well into the twenty-first century.

For instance, and taking its cue from A.H.M Jones (1964) and Kirsten (1958) as they analyzed the transformation of cities of the eastern Roman empire, John 'Wolf' Liebeschuetz (2000, 2001) famously identified the end of the Classical polis and its monumental urbanism with the demise of the aristocratic civic elites of the *curiales*. Together with legal texts and papyri, Liebeschuetz used archaeology (and in particular the end of the epigraphic evidence as one of the principal monumental and architectural markers of evergetism) in order to draw a picture of urban decline as starting in the second half of the sixth century. As a matter of fact, Liebeschuetz regarded the Justinian Age as the culmination of the erosion of urban political and administrative independence started already in the third century (Liebeschuetz 2001, 28–102). Due to the process of centralization at both political and fiscal levels actively pursued by the imperial authorities sitting in Constantinople, provincial cities inexorably lost their prosperity as urban monumentality collapsed. Liebeschuetz's analysis also has the consequence of equating demonumentalization of the Classic urban fabric and landscape with the end of urban life and prosperity.

In fact, one cannot but recognize the enduring social, economic, and political pull of Constantinople on local, provincial elites for the Byzantine urban elites could either chose to move to the capital or the main provincial centers or enter the army, and veer away from an urban political culture (Wickham 2005, 604). Indeed, and as already mentioned- the city-based aristocracies were clearly morphing into a less formal body (*potentiores* often led by the local bishop) as *curiales* became obsolete in a Constantinopolitan-centered political system. However, Liebeschuetz sees the city from the end of a political-administrative telescope for the urban functional life is considered as the sheer result of the exertion of political authority. Leaving aside a methodological criticism (for Liebeschuetz did not include ceramic or seals in his interpretative approach), his conclusions have been reassessed by Jacobs (2012) and Dey (2015). The former points to the level of urban activities not remaining constant throughout the Late Antique period with alternation between periods of urban 'renaissances' and times of stagnation and decline (Jacobs 2012, 113); the latter concludes that "that civil and ecclesiastical office holders continued to imagine the execution of their public mandates, display of authority within the [monumental] backdrop of Late Roman city and its spectators" (Dey 2015, 137).

Moreover, Decker (2016, 86) pitted Liebeschuetz's demonumentalization against the rather less catastrophic (and archaeologically based as see above) view on encroachment of public streets and privatization of public spaces commercial/artisanal. Finally, Whittow (1990, 1996, 2013) repeatedly exposed the drawbacks of a sheer institutional approach to the problem of city transformation. As partially mentioned already, he clearly showed that the decline of *curiales* was part and parcel of a complex ideological, social, political, and economic rearrangement of the imperial superstructure. He also used a wide array of material evidence (from liturgical vessels to buildings, from spolia to copper coins to show us that changes in fashion and cultural values went hand in hand with a different attitude towards public space and city planning (Whittow 1990, 26–27).

Curta (2016, 106) effectively identifies a sort of nostalgia for the former (*polis*) which resurfaces in scholarly works on the subject. For instance, Saradi (2006, 335–40) overtly speaks of the seventh-century (and later) city as a degraded relic of the monumental ancient city stemming from economic stagnation and the end of civilized life. Nevertheless, she also identifies the emergence of new functional centers where the ecclesiastical and military replaced the ancient features of urbanism (Saradi 2006, 469).

Indeed, it is the militarization of the city and its ruling class as well as the defensive function which became the main consideration in the scholarly definition of Byzantine urbanism (Avramea 1979, 289; Ousterhout 2019, 353–78; Howard Johnston 2019). This not to deny that protection and impoverishment of city appearance became a widespread characteristic of the Byzantine city over the centuries of insecurity, political retrenchment, and economic fragmentation (Dagron 2002, 400–1); but rather to avoid generalizations that may lead to the oversimplistic characterization of the seventh-to-tenth century Byzantine city as a fortified place of refuge where a dwindling population and local elites and imperial administrators sheltered from the Dark Ages' storm.

For instance, it is revealing that two of the best excavated Byzantine urban sites (the first located on the Anatolian plateau (Amorium) and the other sitting on an island like in the case of Gortyn in Crete) -on which I will return in the next Chapter with more details- both showed an overflowing of urban life beyond the seventh-eighth century ring of walls; this unraveled throughout "islands" of socio-political patronage, elite and sub-elite residence and artisanal and commercial activities characterized city-life. The main objection could be that they were both provincial capitals and therefore adding up to special cases of Byzantine urbanism. Indeed, Ivison (2001, 25–8) has cogently concluded that the Byzantine state and imperial sponsorship contributed to maintaining provincial cities frequented as the urban function, culture, ideological role, and fabric were transformed and framed by city fortifications and churches from which subsequent growth could build upon.

As a matter of fact, it is important to stress that the role and chronology of Byzantine fortifications have been recently examined by Crow (2017) and Bakirtzis (2005, 2010) with regard to Anatolia and Thessalonike. The term *kastron* should indeed be used with caution when defining major urban fortifications, for they emerged at different times between the seventh and the eleventh century, as not uniformly distributed across the Empire and fulfilling different needs as based on the geographical location and function of each site. One could, for instance, distinguish between the fortification of main provincial capitals like Thessalonike, Smyrna, Nicaea, Amorium or Ancyra vis-à-vis defense of commercial harbors or pilgrimage centers like Ephesos, Sinope on the Black Sea, Side, Patara, and Lymira in Lycia, as well as circuits on hilltops acting as strongholds and refuge across the frontier (*phrouria*) (Crow 2017, 98–107). Moreover, and as already hinted at, the examination of fortified circuits at Euchaita and Amastris, as

well as Thessalonike, showed the importance of walls in projecting and perceiving urban identity.

In fact, urban life often overflows the inner citadels described by military handbooks like the late sixth (or maybe eighth or ninth century) *Strategikon* of Maurice, the Taktika of Leo VI (early tenth century), or Kekaumenos' *strategikon* (eleventh century).[8] These could be in turn paired with the ninth-century account of the Arab geographer ibn Khurradādhbih (1889, I, 689), who described most of Byzantine cities in Asia Minor as fortresses with the exception of Nicomedia (ruined), Ephesos, Amorium, Ancyra, and Nicaea. As Bakirtzis (2010, 353–4) remarks, we should avoid generalizations and "classify fortifications according to the urban entities they protected, their role in the socio-economic transformations of the Byzantine period and their function in local and general defensive networks." Zanini (2016, 133) also defined the militarization of urban space as a multifaceted response to impending external threats as well as the expression of the increasing social, economic, and political importance of military elites.

With this in mind, we can cite Haldon's vision of seventh-to-tenth century cities as shaped by the process of interventionism on the part of the state in civic administration and fiscal structures and by the disappearance of the *curiales* (Haldon 1999). As archaeology plays a big role in Haldon's assessment of the trajectories of Byzantine urbanism, he stresses that the occupied area of Byzantine city proved to have a similar nature: shrinkage of cities to a walled core lodging imperial and ecclesiastical authorities, a reduced population, and a military garrison (Haldon 2010, 77). In a rather similar vein, Brandes (1989, 25–6; 1999, 32) enhances that only a few cities survived through the period under scrutiny (mainly those benefitting from the continuously frequented sea routes or boasting the presence of bishoprics), for the urban topography reflected demographic collapse and the loss of economic activities. In other words, for both Brandes and Haldon (2002), the village and peasant family household became the key elements in the fiscal and administrative state-policies as a new agrarian regime supported the army (and the thematic system) and a *de facto* ruralized social-life outside a few state-supported urban centers (Haldon 2016, 239–48).

The latter point has been recently further stressed by Niewöhner (2006, 2017a). His commanding archaeological overview of urbanism in Anatolia between Late Antiquity and the arrival of the Turks in the eleventh century concludes that urban decline and rural boom were always inversely

linked: any advantage for the fiscal machinery of state and the inhabitants of the countryside worked against the cities and traditional elites (Niewöhner 2006, 74). To the contrary of Foss, Niewöhner (2017a, 46–47) anticipated the collapse of the Classical city in Anatolia to the fifth-sixth century when rural churches replaced the previous focus on monumental evergetism. In this light, it was the so-called invasion period that witnessed urban continuity and vitality as once again confirmed by fortification and church building activity (but this time in cities). When Constantinople regain control over large swaths of Asia Minor from the tenth century, cities once again faded away as a ruralized society was not going to offer any resistance to the arrival of the Turks in the eleventh century (Niewöhner 2017a, 59). Niewöhner, however, also recognized the existence of methodological problems (like full grasp and dating of pottery) and the necessity of distinguishing between inland (plateau) and coastal settlements. Similarly, although focusing on the Balkans and not on Anatolia, Curta has recently framed the *vexata questio* of the transformation of urban centers in geographical terms. Indeed, he pitted the eastern Adriatic coast, Greece, and Crimea against the inner Balkans for the former regions witnessed both the creation of new towns (Ragusa/Dubrovnik and Monemvasia) and the continuation of several old ones (Athens, Corinth, and Thessalonike) in the Middle Ages (Curta 2019, 420–40).

Although none of Curta's overviews is entirely centered on urbanism,[9] his contributions (2006; 2011) are all based on a meticulous inventory of literary sources, archaeological excavations, and analysis of diverse typologies of material evidence (coins, seals, metalwork, and pottery). As a result, urban trajectories in the Byzantine Balkans are presented as deeply intertwined with the political, administrative, and military development of the imperial structure. Byzantium had indeed to wait over one century after the themes of Thrakia in 680 and Hellas in 695 (the latter with a naval connotation) to start regaining large swaths of territory from the Slavic tribes occupying the Balkans. The military campaigns of Irene and Nikephoros I between the late eighth and early ninth century re-established land communications with Thessalonike (which the late-seventh century *Miracles of Saint Demetrius* famously described as repeatedly sieged by the Avars and the Slavs) (Treadgold 1997, 417–425).[10]

One should, however, mention that Curta's gaze went beyond the Balkans. In his seminal article ideally dedicated to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Curta (2016, 103) compares the urban trajectories of different

central places (mainly Gortyn, Amorium, Cherson, Butrint, and Naples). They all across the period seventh-to-ninth century boasted a large economic base, concentrated population, social hierarchies, and, above all, church building activities and persistence of the classic street grid as associated with ceramic assemblages. In this light, he echoes the conclusions drew by Trombley (2001, 133) when assessing what he calls the Mediterranean sea-culture, for all his key studies (with the exceptions of Amorium) are located along the coast for coastal (and insular) communities had more in common with each other than those located on the mainland.

As his conclusion chimes with the Byzantine economic, cultural, political, and administrative koine I repeatedly referred to, it is also important to notice that -well ahead of Curta- Trombley (1993) himself tried to describe Dark Ages Byzantine cities in a comparative context but with a penchant with Greece and the Balkans. He examined the articulation of some of the urban criteria Curta will later dwell upon. These were defenses, a planned street system, the markets, craft, and commercial activities, mints, legal autonomy, and the resiliency of their chora. In fact, Trombley's analysis leans more towards the literary evidence than urban archaeology, and his focus is more on the "exceptional" metropolis of Thessalonike and Constantinople. Finally, even if his deductions seem to anticipate Niewhöner's (later) analysis of the trajectories of Anatolian urbanism, one should not be deceived. Trombley (1993, 432) conjures up the traditional narrative of the evolutionary for the seventh-to- eleventh century Byzantine city, although advocating for its continuity as the immediate successor of the (Hellenistic and) Late Antique polis.

Nevertheless, Trombley has the merit of introducing a more sophisticated perspective in analyzing the perceived historiographical passage from *polis* to *kastron*; a perspective which is indeed shared by Curta (2006, 202–12), who uses archaeological evidence to root the revival of Byzantine urbanism in the Balkans from the ninth century onwards (as culminating in the eleventh century) in the different paths experienced by cities in the so-called Dark Ages. In fact, the new themes established in the tenth century to protect Greece from Bulgarian raids and to fully project Byzantine influence on the Adriatic (Dubrovnik) and the Serbian and Croatian clients breathed new economic life into cities. As economic growth further benefit from the commercialization on the agricultural surplus by local landowners, the development of cities like Athens, Thebes, Sparta, Argos, and Corinth can be seen through the traffic of new locally produced types

of Byzantine ceramics, the mushrooming of urban churches (like in Athens), and the booming of artisanal and commercial activities (as archaeologically documented in Thebes and Corinth) (Bouras 2013, 60–2; François 2016; Vassiliou 2016). Curta (2006, 415–37) indeed attributed the new prosperity of cities and towns in post-Dark Ages Greece to the prominent political, social, and economic role of landed aristocracies, as urban-based leading families even started appearing as archontes or *dynastes* in cities like Athens, Sparta Larissa and Monemvasia (Angold 1984; Neville 2004).

The analysis of Curta (even if in a longer time period) resonates with the analytical approach offered by Wickham (2005, 2009) as mainly based on the pivotal role of Byzantine Anatolia as paired with the Aegean. Like Haldon, Wickham draws his conclusion on Byzantine urbanism from the changing imperial superstructure. He, nevertheless, recognizes the importance of framing the economic trajectories of Byzantine cities as the white sound of the disintegration of the Roman fiscally-based and integrated Mediterranean economic system subdued and the continuous background noise of local redistribution around and across the Mediterranean built-up (Horden and Purcell 2020, 138). More important and central to Wickham's argument is the aristocratic spending power, and as a result, the different pattern of investments on the part of the new informal class of the *potentiores*. As living in the city became a matter of choice for local elites were offered alluring social and economically rewarding choices in the capital (Treadgold 1997, 394–5), wherever the *potentiores* remained (at least partially) urban-oriented, they underpinned a resilient urban economy as only partially based on the role they played as members of the ecclesiastical and secular imperial administration.

Wickham's approach also has the merit of contextualizing the debate on the Byzantine cities by trying to go beyond the opposition consumer vs. productive city, ancient vs. medieval, and *polis* vs. *kastron* in a Mediterranean economic perspective. It encourages us to use material evidence like ceramic and coins and urban archaeology to look at cities as byproducts of local exchange networks betraying peculiar administrative, religious, and economic functionalities. As a result, continuity and decline leave the scene as intensification and abatement.[11] As Whittow (2013, 52–3) put it: "intensification comes when a surplus can be exchanged for other goods. Exchange depends on connectivity (the greater it was, the higher the incentive to increase the output); the reverse is abatement: a shift towards lower production and smaller surpluses, limiting the resources

in the hands of the rich but not necessarily harming the quality of life of population at large."

In this light, one can see the abovementioned development of cities in the Byzantine heartland from the late ninth century onwards as rooted into localized state (military) structures paired with more or less pronounced aristocratic power (Wickham 2009. 355). Two developments of the economic history of the eastern Mediterranean at large therefore impinged upon the Byzantine cities: the first being the increased importance of Egypt and its markets as enhanced by documentary (Geniza *papyri*) (Goitein 1967–8–88). This, for instance, brought about the increasing relevance of a city like Attaleia as a terminal of the Silk Routes (mainly at the expense of Trebizond and hub for commerce with Syria and Palestine (Jacoby 2017, 637). Second, as mainly indicated by ceramic evidence, it became normal in the Mediterranean to transport bulk goods (Wickham 2009, 370).

On the one hand, in the course of the eleventh century the territories of the Empire shrank dramatically due to political instability coupled with repeated invasions (Pechenegs and Cumans), rebellions (Bulgars), and more organized military threats (the Seljuks in Anatolia and the Normans in the Balkans) (Treadgold 1997, 667–706; Angold 2006). As a result the bulk of scholarly contributions on Byzantine urbanism for the period focused on the Aegean (and western coast of Anatolia) as the rump core of the former Byzantine heartland.[12] Further inland on the Anatolian plateau the arrival of the Seljuks (Beihemmer 2017) forced the Byzantines to develop a rather peculiar defensive strategy occasionally involving newly built fortified city-like outposts (like Lopadion (Lau 2016) or military strongholds along the frontier (like Dorylaion-Eskišehir with the aim keeping both the Seljuks Sultanate and the Turkmen nomadic and pastoral tribes at bay (Foss 1996b; De Luigi 2015).

On the other hand, and as a consequence of the economic upturn experienced from the late ninth century on, the Middle Byzantine city appeared as a center of a few thousand people, with religious (bishop) and administrative authority and above all as the focus of bustling commercial and economic activities (Angold 1985, 16). In other words, the image of Byzantine urbanism as yielded both by the (now larger) array of literary and documentary sources (like the eleventh-century Cadaster of Thebes, the monastic archives of Athos and Patmos, and the list of fiscal units in the Imperial *chrysobulls*) as well as urban archaeology paradoxically reminds us of seventh-eight century Walmsley and Kennedy's madina (Hendy

1985, 85–90; Curta 2006, 277). Indeed, the Komnenian Byzantine city under the Komnenian (aside Constantinople and Thessalonike) was a rather crammed urban environment made of houses, monasteries, workshops, agricultural installations, stables, and administrative buildings bursting around market and ecclesiastical spaces (Decker 2016, 122).

The appearance of Middle Byzantine urban fabric, landscape, planning, and structure is one of privatization and resulted from the active patronage and economic underpinning of local aristocratic families (Angold 1985, 11). The local gentry (archontes), however, was not simply depending on state-salary, pensions, and titles to retain inherited wealth and social status as their cities grow from centers of consumption to centers of production (Magdalino 1993, 150). The timing may differ. The wealth of a city like Athens was reflected by the large number of ecclesiastical architectures and urban monasteries propping up from the tenth century on (Bouras 2010, 127–32); whereas along the western Anatolian coast, Ephesos thrived until the harbor silted up in the late twelfth century causing the settlement to basically focus around the well-secured pilgrimage center on the Aysoluk Hill which lodged the sixth-century basilica dedicate to Saint John the Theologian (Ladstätter 2019, 65; Caner Yüksel 2019) On the contrary, Pergamon seems to have started experiencing an economic growth from the late twelfth century on, since a residential quarter expanded at the foot of the military outpost occupying a former Hellenistic and around the middle of the thirteenth century occupied almost the entire southern slope of the hill where the former Classical and Late Antique city was located (Rheidt 2002, 624; Otten 2017, 228–9).

One could indeed follow the trajectories of Byzantine urbanism both in terms of social structure and fabric. As already mentioned, the presence of local elites fully impinged upon the economic functions as well as the urban socio-political life, monumental appearance, and city-scape. Social divisions can be followed in the contemporary descriptions of cities (both large and small ones): at the top came the archontes followed by soldiers, householders engaged in trade and business, and, finally, the demos (people) (Angold 1984, 238). In fact, it was difficult to distinguish between the first and second tiers in terms of material wealth and urban patronage. One should also consider the increasing role played by urban monasteries and local clergy as well as occasional important religious characters. A good example of the latter is offered by the Saint Nikon the Metanoite, whose hagiography (and testament) dates back to the early eleventh

century (Thomas and Hero 2000). The holy men arrived in Lakedaemonia-Sparta as local archontes asked his help to quell a plague outbreak.

This city -or better its acropolis- seems to have been re-occupied only at the beginning of the ninth century after having been long deserted following the Slav invasions. Like in the case of another renowned Classical city (Knossos in Crete), the narrative of abandonment and desertification is, however, less supported by the archaeological evidence than previously thought (Tsigonaki 2007, 284; Sweetman 2012). It mainly rests on the Chronicle of Monemvasia (though written almost two-century later than the events it reports on (Curta 2006, 113–5; Kalligas 2010, 1–6). Since the Chronicle mentions the emigrations of the Lakedaemonians to the new coastal city of Monemvasia (as well as the inhabitants of other Greek cities which temporally relocated to southern Italy or Aegina) (Lemerle 1963, 73), it purportedly bolstered the claims of the local religious and political authority as well as entailing a sense of civic self-identity; this not to assert that Lakedaemonia-Sparta did not lose its importance to the new settlement (as strategically located along the shipping routes linking Constantinople with the Ionian and Tyrrhenian sea), but rather to deny that creation of Monemvasia (see Fig. 2.4) in the early seventh century did entail the immediate disappearance of its famous predecessor (Kalligas 2010), which indeed resurfaced in the sources (together with other famous Peloponnesian cities) at the beginning of the ninth century (Anagnostakis 2012, 121–2).

When Sparta is mentioned again, as showed by the abovementioned Life and Testament of Saint Nikos, it boasted local landowning elites who

Fig. 2.4 Monemvasia

expressed a sense of civic pride and self-identity although never formally invested with political or administrative powers by the center. Indeed, the local archontes not only rebuked Nikon's pretense of exiling all the local Jews, but they also opposed its idea of building a church in the former *agora* as used by them as a polo-ground (*tzikanisterion*) (Thomas and Hero 2000, 317–20). So, could one regard the Middle Byzantine urban-based archontes as the successor of the *potentiores*? Caution is needed here. In fact, *archon* is a rather neutral title as it generally defines any officials possessing powers and later mainly governors (Prigent 2008, 409–13). Archontes could also refer to the urban ruling class coming from prominent local landowning families (Harvey 1989, 225). However, we could find the archontes as imperial authorities with administrative powers over the local community (Treadgold 1988, 15); we have, for instance, evidence of the existence of the so-called Archon's House in Butrint dated to the second half of the ninth century (Bowden and Hodges 2012, 228–29).

It is more important -in my opinion- to see how the presence of the archontes underpinned changes in the local urban fabric and landscape as documented by archaeology and material culture. In the very case of Lakedaemonia-Sparta, for instance, urban excavations have yielded evidence of a twelfth-century bath (Bouras 1982) as well as workshops producing glazed painted wares (so-called Measles Wares as dated to late eleventh-twelfth century), which were distributed across the western half of the Byzantine empire (François 2016, 147; Vassiliou 2018). Magdalino (1993, 144–5) has indeed pointed to Lakedaemonia-Sparta as one of the vertexes of a triangle including Euboea and the harbor of Almyros in Thessaly, which yielded the richer evidence for eleventh and twelfth-century economic growth and urban expansion (as also documented by the growth in the money put in circulation and the Venetian claims for a structured presence in the areas, as showed by the Imperial *chrysobulls* (Avramea 1979, 290–1; Harvey 1989, 259).

However, we do not often dispose of enough archaeological or material evidence to reconstruct the urban facies of Middle Byzantine cities (with the exceptions of important and well-excavated centers like Thessalonike, Corinth, or Pergamon). A recent *Colloquium* held at Dumbarton Oaks entitled has, for instance, examined the transformations in the idea, conception, and forms of urban neighborhoods and districts.[13] The starting point is the residential zone which has a considerable face-to-face interaction and boasts physical and or social characteristics making it distinctive and unique (Smith 2010, 139). Neighborhoods mirror the socio-political

character and identity of the city and therefore shaped the urban fabric and landscape. It would be only too easy to cite here the works of Paul Magdalino (2001, 2016) as centered on the so-called *geitoniai* of Constantinople; but even for the capital city such neighborhoods were frequently regarded as points of reference, but almost never described in detail (Magdalino 2016, 27). For Constantinople itself, the main focus of archaeological and scholarly interest has been monumental, religious, and palatial architectures (Ousterhout 2019, 353–78; Savage 2019). Although these inevitably acted as centers of aggregation, they did not exhaust the role and function played by residential neighborhoods in the socio-political urban life. In fact, neighborhoods can have other and diverse structural catalysts (like fountains or commercial infrastructures of the type documented for the Venetian quarter in Constantinople) as well as more intangible way of expressing local identities (like the ceremonial, religious or triumphal processions (Jacoby 2014; Berger 2001).

As mentioned already, Constantinople represents an obvious exceptional example of urbanism due to its size, functions, location, and political and religious status. Nevertheless, when one could analyze the development of neighborhoods of provincial cities, this provides an invaluable insight into public spaces, urban planning, architecture and functions of Byzantine cities allowing to focus on the relationship between social structure and the cityscape (Bouras 2013, 46). On the one hand, through neighborhoods, one can better understand phases of urban transition in terms of organization and functional use of space. This, in turn, leads to exploring issues of planning and zoning for scholars have too often proposed another opposition to explain the transition between the Classic *polis* and the Medieval Byzantine city: Hyppodameian regular street-grid vs. absence of planning and chaotic use of space (Bouras 2002, 511–12). As already mentioned, not only some cities retained a regular street grid across the empire- but recent research has also proved that military and imperially sponsored building projects (if often stemming from imitation of Constantinopolitan urban fabric and street-pattern) provided Byzantine cities with a rather sophisticated concept of zoning and functional spatial division (Ivison 2007, 37–42). This is exemplified by the cases of Amorium, Amastris, Ancyra, Euchaita, Corinth, Athens, and Monemvasia, where we are confronted with the presence of an upper citadel and a lower city as both defended by a set of walls (Haldon 2006, 614–17).

In this light, and as Buchwald (2007) concludes, one is, for instance, encouraged -once again- to go beyond the idea that imposing walls were

simply a constant reminder of threats. As excavations in thirteenth century Pergamon (and in Mystras, whose development exceeds the chronological timespan of this book) showed, even inward-looking residential compounds, as well as windy roads, could offer emergency defense (Kalopissi-Verti 2013; Niewöhner 2017b). Moreover, by considering a "rather open-end definition of city-planning as a thoughtful arrangement of urban features with respect to topography, preexisting site conditions, functional and legal consideration and political, economic or aesthetic factors (i.e., preservation and recycling of historical features), one can conclude that town planning [indeed] existed in Byzantine Middle Ages" (Buchwald 2007, 74).

So, if we accept that tenth-to-thirteenth century city was less of a chaotic and incoherent conglomerate of residential, productive, religious, social, and cultural foci and if walls were also a clear mark of urban collective identity, one could also conclude with Kiousopoulou (one of the few scholars who attempted an all-encompassing overview of middle Byzantine city) that the goal here is to examine who was [...] the inhabitants of the cities at a time when increasing economic activity made the city not only the administrative center it has always been but also as the crucial stake in the conflict of the various social groups (Kiousopoulou 2012, 255). Indeed, and to the contrary of Shea (2009), Magdalino (1993), and Harvey (1989), Kiousopoulou's focus is more on literary texts (and in particular enkomia or praises), for they bring up the new role of cities as independent political entities for the city has now replaced the empire (Kiousopoulou 2012). There is a clear influence on the part of the developing Italian city-states, although this is not appraised archaeologically but more in terms of literary perceptions, communal identity, and increasing civic and institutional autonomy (Shea 2009, 306). This trend will come full circle after 1204 when the Empire lost its role as a unifying ideological element and a new urban identity was emerging politically self-determined (Saradi 2012, 44–5).

The influx of western models of urbanism was, however, limited as, for instance, churches and monasteries never reached the size and urbanistic prominence of the Italian or French cathedral but remained more a reference point for local households and districts; neighborhoods, however, seem to have remained socially mixed with no clear gentrification; commercial and artisanal activities gained a foothold in the urban landscape as the abovementioned archaeological evidence from Greek cities like Thessalonike, Thebes, Athens, and Corinth showed (Bouras 2013, 60–3);

finally, the role of walls became central for they acted as a monumental penchant to the literary enkomia for they not only are often described and praised for their defensive role, but they also emerge as a clear boundary for city collectiveness (Kiousopoulou 2012, 257).

In this light, and in tune with a conclusion to this historiographical chapter, it is worth mentioning here Eustathios of Thessalonike's contemporary eyewitness account of the fall of the second most important and wealthiest city of the Empire to the Normans in 1185. At the time of the siege on the part of the troops of the Norman king Roger II, Eustathios was the Metropolite of the city. His account also takes its cue from the tenth-century John Kaminiates' relation on fall of the city by the hands of the Greek renegade Leo of Tripoli in 904 (Kaminiates, *The Capture*). Like its predecessor, Eusthatios (*The Capture*) provides us with a very detailed topographical description of Thessalonike. It is clear that the acropolis and the lower walls are prominent features in defining and conceptualizing the city as the defensive outlook is completed by the gates. The need for protection is clear; however, one should take into account the author's personal cultural background (Angold 1995, 171–96).

We are indeed in the presence of a "humanist" intellectual (as others like Niketas and Michael Choniates could be mentioned in the same breath) whose works' elements of *ekphrasis* not only helps historians (and archaeologists) to try and reconstruct the topography and daily-life of cities like Athens or Thessalonike but also allows them to reassess the way Byzantines sees and experienced the city. Indeed, Niketas Choniates reminds us that the Byzantine city is tantamount to a magnificent and lofty tower which reminds us of the walls of Thessalonike and the tall churches and palaces dotting the Constantinopolitan lifestyle (*Annals*, 238; Bakirtzis 2005, 27). Byzantine humanists used enkomia to both projects an urban image for the elite class serving its political goals and ideology and search on intellectuals for antique modes of government (Saradi 2012, 44–45). As a result, the Byzantine city could be seen as the material representation of the ideological, religious, social well as political, administrative, military, and economic functions of its rulers (state and elites) and its people. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that a city also represents the projection of the mentality and an "imaginary" creation of its inhabitants. It would be only too simple to quote Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (Calvino 1978). Calvino's novel has indeed called upon by Byzantinists (Curta 2016; Tzvikis 2020) and used as a metaphor for urban transition

or disappearance. Here, I would rather use it as maybe the best example of idealizing the mystical power of the city and its citizens.

The trajectories of the Byzantine city post-1204 could be seen in the functional, administrative, and urbanistic characters; Byzantine urbanism started developing from the tenth century onwards (Angold 1985, 36); however, these can be seen both in the archeological reality as well as the relationship between the city and its inhabitants as expressed via literary texts like enkomia or hagiographies. Through these we can fully grasp the contradiction that the late Byzantine city-life was caught in. Each city was shaped by the value of its inhabitants, each individually and all together. As a result, the place of origin the place becomes a homeland, a gathering of historical memories gaining more and more intense emotional charge. Indeed, this attitude on the part of the citizens (elites and people alike) stemmed from a vital economic life as well as a continuous religious and administrative relevance, although becoming more and more the basis for the promotion of local interests and socio-cultural identity (Kiousopoulou 2012, 56–60). In the end, one must admit that the presence of foreign characters (like the Italian merchants), the imperial concessions provided to cities like Monemvasia, and the fragmentation of the Empire played an important role in the creation of new institutional attitudes of urban self-representations as potentially close to those of the Italian city-state (Shea 2009, 312). However, the looming presence and ideological pull of the *Basileus* sitting in what was only a shadow of its alluring past, but still regarded as the "Queen of the Cities," and later the arrival of the Ottomans, never allowed the emergence of what Kiousopoulou (2012) describes as a bourgeois behavior and morale as a single urban political body.

As the last few pages have taken the reader away from archaeology, and as this brief historiographical narrative of the main interpretative themes of Byzantine urbanism is coming to a close, it is now time to return to an analysis of the reality on the ground. In this light, the next chapter will address the diachronic development of Byzantine cities in three different areas of the Empire: the Aegean, the Anatolian Plateau, and the so-called insular and coastal system. For each of these geo-morphological and administrative regional divisions, I will use well-excavated and published sites against which to project and trace the changes of the economic, military, religious and socio-political urban functions across almost six hundred years of Byzantine history. I am positive some of the overarching themes I presented in the previous pages will help the reader to call the Byzantine city by its many and real names. After all, and quoting Calvino's

Marco Polo, a writer can only “speak and speak […], but it is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear.” (Calvino 1978, 135).

Notes

1. For a full-scanned version of the Peutingerian Table see http://www.fhaugsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost03/Tabula/tab_intr.html retrieved on 1 March 2021.
2. See for instance the events organized during the Covid-19 pandemic by TORCH-Oxford Research Center in the Humanities (https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/new-critical-approaches-to-the-byzantine-world-network#/ retrieved on 1 March 2021) and the debate promoted by Antony Kaldellis and Leonora Neville on the opportunity of abandoning the labels Byzantium and Byzantine. The latter are thought of enabling a Eurocentric western-oriented narrative about Greece, Rome, Europe, and the Renaissance that does not want to recognize classically educated, Greek-speaking, Orthodox Romans in the east (https://byzantiumandfriends.podbean.com/e/43-is-it-time-to-abandon-the-rubric-byzantium-with-leonora-neville/ retrieved on 1 March 2021).
3. See above Chap. 1, pp. xx–xx.
4. The notable exceptions have been already mentioned in Chap. 1, p. xx.
5. For the *Notitiae Episcopatuum* see Darrouzès (1981); for the Acts see Mansi (1759–1927).
6. The translation from German is mine.
7. See also Chap. 1, ftn. 10.
8. See McGeer (2008) with reference to all the above mentioned military handbooks.
9. Curta (2006, 430) himself advocated for a synthesis of local studies of individual settlements in the region.
10. This although the military outlook remained unfavorable to Byzantium until well into the second half of the ninth century (Curta 2019, 310.)
11. Although the model of intensification-abatement was not originally applied to urban sites (Horden and Purcell 2000, 260–79) it has been effectively used to interpret their transformation in socio-political, economic and cultural terms (see for instance Avni 2011, 328–9).
12. See above, Chap. 1.
13. The Colloquium entitled “The Byzantine Neighborhood: Urban Space and Political Action” was organized by Fotini Kondili and Benjiamin Anderson https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/scholarly-activities/the-byzantine-neighborhood-urban-space-and-political-action-1 retrieved on 1 March 2021.

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CHAPTER 3

Urbanism in the Byzantine Heartland and the Coastal/Insular *koine*

Abstract This chapter will navigate through the many incarnations of Byzantine urbanism in three different geographical areas of the empire: Anatolia and Aegean (the two constitutive pillars of the Byzantine heartland) and the so-called insular/coastal koine. Each of these played a changing and diverse role in the political, administrative, fiscal, and military strategies of the empire, as well as betraying peculiar economies of scale. It will examine by proposing a brief historical and archaeological overview of a selection of urban centers in different geographical contexts. This should help the reader see through the various functional trajectories of the Byzantine city (sometimes contemporary, sometimes diachronic) from a comparative perspective. It allows to extrapolate the reality of Byzantine urbanism from the historiographical and terminological debate as presented by the literary sources.

Keywords Byzantine heartland • Islands • Coastland • Koine

This chapter will navigate through the many incarnations of Byzantine urbanism in three different geographical areas of the empire. As already mentioned, each of these played a changing and diverse role in the political, administrative, fiscal, and military strategies of the empire, as well as

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betraying peculiar economies of scale. More importantly, the unique geomorphological character and the resilience of land or sea lines of communications should be taken into consideration when assessing the dynamics of development of regional urbanism from a diachronic perspective. I must warn the reader that the following selection of urban centers in different geographical contexts like Anatolia, the Aegean, and finally, the insular/coastal system (or better *koine*) is by no means exhaustive. Some urban sites (in particular the least published or not fully excavated ones) will not be included or only partially mentioned. I remain, however, positive that the proposed selection will offer a good guide to the trajectories of urbanism in each of the regional (and subregional contexts).

Second, and also in tune with a preliminary caveat, one should be careful when delineating the relationship between geography and imperial politics for, as Wickham (2005, 31) remarks: "the Byzantine empire could be looked at through the discontinuities between the sea-coasts and the plateau;" this implies a sort of overlapping in terms of urban typologies and developments in terms of local administration, politics and, of course, cityscape, fabric, and planning. One could think here of the (abovementioned) city of Attaleia. Although geographically located in Anatolia and therefore part of a region regarded by the Byzantine mainly as a military bulwark against the Caliphate until the mid of the tenth century, Attaleia was at the same time a thematic capital as well as an important hub in the Mediterranean economy. Although boasting an impressive set of walls and hosting a detachment of the Byzantine fleet, even local military governors, betrayed a cultural familiarity with the "enemy," whereas the local economy benefitted from the shipping routes linking southern Anatolia with the eastern Mediterranean (Lilie 2005). In other words, the reader may feel puzzled and hesitant in categorizing the city as part of the coastal *koine* rather than as a "typical" thematic capital (like Ancyra or Amorium) or else as a center of primary and acute imperial fiscal and military interest (like Amastris) as opposed to a commercial and shipping hub (like Side or Ephesos).

So, in a sense, the proposed geographical division could be regarded as artificial and superimposed. I remain, however, positive that the proposed partition will help to see through the manifold functional trajectories of the Byzantine city (sometimes contemporary, sometimes diachronic) in a comparative perspective; this should also allow me to extrapolate the reality of Byzantine urbanism from the historiographical and terminological debate as presented by the literary sources. The example of Attaleia also

shed light on the importance of the frontier and on the trajectory of those cities which for shorter or longer periods of time were of a piece with a border region. As Preiser-Kapeller (2015) cogently remarks when analyzing the relations across the frontier, the importance of coastal cities like Attaleia (as well as coastal ports like Side or Patara and even larger harbors like Ephesos, to quote only some) went beyond their immediate military or political significance for the Byzantine state and its fiscal machinery. They emerged as the most important points of interactions between the interior of Anatolia and the Mediterranean world.

However, a similar process can be fully traced along the terrestrial frontier as well; as partially mentioned, in twelfth-century Anatolia, a clear settlement pattern emerged throughout the frontier between the Seljuks and the Byzantines. Indeed, under the Komnenian dynasty, imperial new urban projects like Lopadion or Anchyalous could be regarded as a deliberate projection of imperial influence across the frontier; at the same time, they were part of an in-depth defensive network along roads and river valleys at the border with Turkish controlled lands: walled sites hosting local administrators as well as a garrison (Lau 2016, 445). Indeed, frontiers, as areas where political and cultural authority intersect, and therefore a negotiation was constantly taking place for no party was strong enough to oust the other, are very interesting viewpoints for examining the trajectories of Byzantine urbanism.

Moving away from Anatolia, one should notice the ability of Byzantine imperial and religious authorities as well as bureaucratic machinery to build elaborate responses to the functional needs of the local, provincial population by proposing a local and peculiar solution to the problem of settlement should account for the variety of urban (or urban-like responses). Here, one could also think of new sites like Kastro Apalirou on the island of Naxos, for which the *nomen* is not simply an *omen* (Magdalino 2018, 23–4). In fact, the site as established in the early Middle Ages was not simply a walled safe-haven built in response to the Arab raids in the Aegean Sea (central as it was to the existence of the empire in the eighth century), but rather as an expression of a different kind of functional needs.

In the following three sections, I will therefore present the reader with "personifications" of urban epiphenomenon in a diachronic perspective. As urban archaeology and material culture have the pride of place, certain sites will repeatedly resurface in the narration: Amorium, Ephesos, Attaleia, and Ancyra in Anatolia, Kastro Apalirou, Monemvasia, Athens, Thebes, Corinth, and Thessalonike in the Aegean half of the heartland and finally

Gortyn and Eleutherna in Crete, Syracuse and Catania in Sicily, Cagliari in Sardinia, and Salamis-Constantia in Cyprus in the insular/coastal koine will represent the crucial reference points here.

The selection is obviously expedient for most of the above-mentioned sites are representative (although by no means exclusively so) of: a new typology of settlement with economically preeminent functions (Monemvasia); or are Classical urban sites which managed to rebuild a new-life beyond purely state-driven lines (Ephesos, Catania, Eleutherna, and Athens); or are representative of completely new ways of imagining, planning, and building a city (Kastro Apalirou), or -finally- are Late Antique cities becoming central to the restructuring of the Byzantine imperial and religious, fiscal and administrative, military and bureaucratic networks (Amorium, Ancyra, Attaleia, Thessalonike, Corinth, Syracuse, and partially Gortyn, Cagliari, and Salamis-Constantia). Last but not least, most of these sites had a lifespan that encompassed the six centuries under scrutiny here, with the obvious exception of the Cretan and Cypriot cities. Gortyn and Salamis-Constantia, however, fell prey to the re-orientation and re-arrangement of local urban settlement patterns, which nevertheless were not caused by the Arab invasions (as often supposed to) of the seventh and eighth century (Cosentino 2013). As the categorization proposed above should not be regarded as a clear-cut one, it remains, in my opinion, useful to draw a picture of local urban trajectories to be used in a comparative and diachronic perspective across the imperial territories and even beyond.

3.1 Once upon a Time in Anatolian Byzantine Cities

Drawing a broad-brush picture of the trajectories of Byzantine cities in Anatolia necessarily means following in the footsteps of Foss (1977) and Brandes (1989). Although the latter has limited his analysis to the Dark Ages, the former has proposed a long-term archaeologically based overview of some of the most important cities in the region. Other scholars have also proposed a regional or city-based analysis of urban settlement patterns, including cities like Nicaea (Foss 1996; Angold 2003b). Pergamon (Rheidt 2001; Otten 2017), Aphrodisias in Caria (Roueché 1989, 2007), Aizanoi and Miletos (Müller-Wiener 1967; Niewöhner 2006, 2016, 2017a, b), Ancyra (Foss 1980; Peschlow 2015), Hierapolis

(Arthur 2006b), Euchaita (Haldon 2018), Sardis (Crawford 1990; Foss and Scott 2002), Amastris (Crow and Hill 1990, 1995), Sinope (Crow 2014, 2017b), Trebizond (Eastmond 2021) and Sagalassos (Waelkens et al. 2008; Poblome et al. 2009). More importantly, one should consider the above-mentioned publications on the Byzantine fortifications (Foss and Winfield 1986) and the archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia (Niewöhner 2017a); the latter included short overviews for most of the excavated cities in the region at large. Finally, regular updates on urban excavations can be found on a large score of publications issued on an annual basis (like the *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, *Anatolian Studies, Belleten, Adalia, Olba*, *Arkhaia Anatolika,* and *Anatolia Antiqua*).

Propose a full-fledge account of each of these urban sites is simply an impossible task, as Anatolia, in truth, adds up to a set of subregional geomorphological contexts both in terms of landscapes and climates. In fact, as Koder (2017, 17–19) asserts: "the common name in Byzantine Greek was *mikra Asia* (Asia Minor) [and] it may be divided into a western, a central and eastern part according to the maritime influence on the climate and altitude over above sea level." In each of these, the urban settlement pattern was historically different with a higher density on the coastal plains and a lesser one in the western mountainous hinterland (and even less on the plateau and the eastern part of Anatolia) (Koder 2017, 20–22; Haldon 2010, 6). Recent studies have also actively tried to integrate science, archaeology, and historical data to extensively reconstruct the climate and environment of Byzantine Anatolia (Haldon et al. 2014). In fact, one should not forget the looming presence of the capital. As Haldon (2018, 244) states, it was the political centrality of the capital that determined the creation of "three broad zones, reflecting the differential effects of hostile activity in Anatolia; […] zones within which the nature of towns and their relationship to the surrounding rural communities varied according to local and broader regional conditions in the period from the middle of the seventh century into the tenth century." The outer zone was the most exposed one and roughly described as the Arab-Byzantine frontier; the second zone included major fortresses (sic.) such as Chonai, Sozopolis, Akroinon, Amorium, and Ancyra; finally -as already hinted at- the inner zone was centered around Constantinople itself.

As already hinted at in the previous chapters, Constantinople should be regarded as exceptional, and as a result, it cannot be included in this brief overview of Anatolian urbanism. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that it was through political rituals as reenacted in the provinces that

bounds of loyalty and identification with the Imperial oikoumene and the Constantinopolitan court were created and maintained. One could think here of the customs of dating legal acts based on the Byzantine imperial calendar or imperial tenure as well as those urban ceremonies through which cities expressed their loyalty to Constantinople (see Fig. 3.1) (McCormick 1998, 46–7).

More important for the purpose of this section is the fact that Constantinople was actually regarded as a model for structuring and shaping local urban landscapes. Indeed, "urban sites could be Constantinople in miniature: [...] links with Constantinople [...] all imbricated in the physical fabric and the living present of surviving [...] cities, ended in

Fig. 3.1 Constantinople (Istanbul), Column of Constantine (early fourth century)

Anatolia only with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks" (Dey 2015, 213). As a matter of fact, two of the cities which retained and replicated the topography, structures, and fabric of the capital well into the ninth century as they happen to be two of the best-excavated sites of the whole Byzantine Anatolia: Amorium on the plateau and Ephesos on the western Aegean coast.

I will be using them as two examples of the contribution urban archaeology can help to sharpen our focus on Anatolian cities as not simply shrinking and ruralizing already in the sixth century or fading as a consequence of the Persian and Arab invasions and following the reorganization of the state along thematic lines (Jacobs 2014, 4426–7). For instance, Aphrodisias in Caria, Magnesia on the Meander, Miletus, Pergamon, and Priene represent good examples of a dwindling urban life; for them archeology, as well as material culture show how only fortified areas excluding large portions of the Late Antique cityscape were frequented between the late seventh and the eleventh century (Cormack 1990; Bingöl 2006; Niewöhner 2006; Otten 2010, 6–9; Fildhuth 2016). In fact, Ephesos and Amorium tell us a different story.

There can be little doubt that Amorium built its long-standing fortune on its role as a thematic capital (and remained so well into the eleventh century) (Ivison 2007); Ephesos combined military relevance and religious significance as a pilgrimage center with a harbor securing the arrival of goods and people traveling across Aegean and Mediterranean shipping routes as well as a market-fair commercializing the produce of its fertile hinterland (Ladstätter 2019). As will be seen, a resilient and monetarized economy characterized both sites in the Dark Ages, as the well-documented and extensively published analysis of material culture (in particular ceramics and coins) yielded in both sites has confirmed (Lightfoot 2007; Böhlendorf-Arslan 2012; Vroom 2019). Moreover, their continuous frequentation and vital urban life hint at a model of Anatlurban development at least partially alternative to those defined simply by fortified hilltop settlements (Ancyra and Pergamon) or dwindling city-life swimming in a large and walled Late Antique space (Nicaea, Attaleia) or even total disappearance (Aphrodisias, Magnesia on the Meander, Priene, and Sagalassos).

Amorium has been one of the best excavated, published, and investigated sites of Byzantine Anatolia as excavations have been (almost) uninterruptedly conducted at the site for more than thirty years (Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006); as such it has been repeatedly referred to in most of the surveys of Byzantine urbanism I already referred to. The city was renowned

as the birth-place of the imperial Amorian dynasty as established by Michael II in 820 and lasting until 868 (Treadgold 1997, 433–55). Amorium was also the alleged place of origin of the forty-two soldiers martyred at Samarra in 845 (Kolia-Demrmitzaki 2002). The city was founded on a wide plateau near the springs of the Sangarius river and lay less than two hundred kilometers to the south of another important Byzantine Anatolian city (Ancyra), which -like Amorium- was also raised to the status of thematic capital in the mid-seventh century when both targeted by the Arab raids (Foss 1980, 75–80).[1]

Amorium betokened a substantial military presence and a rather large population sheltered by two impressive sets of walls. The partitioned urban landscape was organized around an upper fortified mound, possibly including the secure headquarters of the *strategós* (the thematic military commander), his staff together with other imperial administrators, and the residential lower city. The latter included foci of settlement which -according to one of the excavators- preserved the "late antique framework of public buildings, streets and public and private spaces forming the grid within which the Dark Ages city developed." (Ivison 2007, 38). The walls encompassing the lower city dated to the sixth century (Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006, 43–7; Ivison 2007, 33), as also confirmed by a passage in the seventh-century Life of Saint Theodore of Sykeon (Dawes and Baynes 1948, 107). The walls had structural and stylistic similarities with other Late Antique ramparts (like those in Thessalonike and Corinth) (Decker 2016, 109). The maintenance of the classical street grid, although encroached by artisanal installations and commercial shops, has allowed comparisons with cities like Cherson and Gortyn (on which I will return in the next few pages) (Curta 2016, 96–7).

The excavations in Amorium have, in fact, also yielded traces of numerous wells, public buildings, four churches, and, above all, artisanal installations, which point to a good level of economic activity throughout well into the tenth century. In particular, it is worth mentioning the bathhouse with a domed apodyterium, which although partially closed in the eighth century, remained in use in the ninth century as its privatization bespeaks of changing social habits rather than a decline of urban life (Lightfoot 2017, 335). Not far away from the bathhouse (see Fig. 3.2), the impressive Lower City Basilica marked the urban landscape since Late Antiquity as surrounded by a vast complex of buildings including a large baptistery (Ivison 2007, 14; Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006, 83–5). The complex was the seat of the city autocephalic metropolitan (Dey 2015, 202). It was

Fig. 3.2 Amorium, seventh-eighth century bathhouse and late ninth-tenth century enclosure

rebuilt after the siege and destruction of the city on the part of the Abbassid Caliph al-Mut'assim in 838 (Treadgold 1988, 297–9; Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006, 51–5).

This event represented an important watershed in the history of Amorium as the siege and the sack of the city as birth-place of the Amorian dynasty represented a blow to the Constantinopolitan court, although it has few military consequences. Amorium's fall did not ring the death knell for the city as excavations have yielded evidence of almost immediate resettlement, as also reported by Arab sources (Decker 2016, 113). Amorium remained a large and prosperous settlement well into the eleventh century. The Lower city church was rebuilt in the second half of the ninth century, and its architectural style and decoration allow us to compare it with domed churches in Constantinople, Myra, and Greece (Lightfoot 2017, 338–9). Moreover, as the Lower city walls were left in disrepair, the Upper city fortification was instead restored with extensive

use of spolia (Pallis 2019, 62). This reminds us of an analogous functional and propagandistic use of inscriptions and reused architectural fragments in the contemporary refurbishment of the walled enceintes of Ancyra and Nicaea as stemming from a deliberate imperial effort (Foss 2003, 253; Peschlow 2015, 159–62). In fact, the layout and the building technique point of Amorian Upper city walls bear witness to the experience handed down by military treatises and therefore betrays a substantial investment on the part of the state and the ruling dynasty (Ivison 2001, 15–18).

Both archaeology and analysis of ceramics and coins also point to both the economic vitality of the city post-838 as building upon substantial industrial and commercial activities documented already for the seventh and eighth centuries (Ivison 2007, 40). The sack of the city, as Lightfoot (2017, 336) remarks, "sealed deposit that can be securely dated, and so fill the gap in our knowledge of the material culture of Byzantium in the early ninth century." In particular, we possess outstanding evidence concerning pottery, glass, and wine production, which also helps us to reassess the idea that only cities located on the coast and benefitting from maritime shipping routes could boast substantial commercial activity and economic life (Lightfoot 2007, 271; Lightfoot 2012). The chronological pattern of circulation of local coin finds (mainly copper), as compared to the whole series of Anatolian sites, allows us to assert that exceptions to the general breakdown in eight and early-ninth century level of monetization were not only limited to some better favored coastal regions, but also to some inland areas (Lightfoot 1998). The large number of coins dating from the beginning of the tenth until the late eleventh century shows that Amorium continue to remain an economically flourishing town (Katzari et al. 2012, 117).

Although, as already mentioned, one should be careful about any conclusion based on coin finds, it is important to notice that numismatic evidence chimes with the analysis of ceramic and archaeology. Locally made pottery, including common and fine wares (Amorium glazed wares), has been documented as produced by local workshops from the eighth till the tenth century (Bohlendörf-Arslan 2012, 162). As also Constantinopolitan Glazed White Ware pottery has been yielded, it is clear that imports played a role in the economic life of the city, as also showed by the luxurious silk textiles (Lightfoot 2007, 273). It is possible that a large artisanal and commercial quarter developed around the bathhouse as initially related to the production of wine (presses and treading floors have been excavated). The so-called "enclosure" indeed appears to have hosted a series of

interconnected buildings which continued in use in the Middle Byzantine period (Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006, 113–25; Ivison 2012). This should come as no surprise considering the fertile territory surrounding the city as well as the abundance of groundwater which fed the industrial installations (as well as the bathhouse). Glass cullets and leather goods all point to the variety of goods produced in the enclosure workshops (and possibly in other areas of the city) pointing to sustained levels of demand underpinned by the local military, administrative, and religious elites whose members managed to get buried in a high-status location in the baptistery and the narthex of the refurbished basilica. In fact, the city also boasted a pilgrimage center dedicated to Saint Konon (Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2006, 86; 102–3).

Although Amorium remained pivotal within the administrative, fiscal, and military imperial structures, its role within the empire transformed vis-à-vis the changing political and military Anatolian landscape (Haldon 2010, 58–64). Between the late ninth and the early eleventh century the empire had experienced a gradual expansion and consolidation of its territory (Kaldellis 2017, 142). Indeed, Amorium moved from a seventh and eighth-century fortified city standing against the repeated Arab raids across the frontier to a tenth-eleventh-century supply base along the roads leading to the Syrian frontier (Lightfoot 2017, 341).

The administrative and military importance of Amorium only faded away in the aftermath of the Byzantine defeat at Mantzikert (1071), which precipitated the Anatolian plateau into a dynastic and political crisis that lasted even after Alexios I Komnenos seized the throne. As a consequence, western Anatolia became a frontier zone between the empire and the neighboring Turkic Danishmendids in the north and the Seljuk Sultanate of Konya in the south (Lilie 1990). This frontier was, however, was far from being impermeable for towns like Kastamon, Ancyra, and Dorylaeum (to quote just a few) were being lost almost as soon as they were recaptured (Magdalino 1993, 24).

Indeed, the task of strengthening the defense of central Byzantine Anatolia and provide some measure of security for the cities and people fell on Alexios himself and -above all- his successors John II and Manuel. It is also important to notice that former Byzantine cities like Ancyra and Konya/Iconium nevertheless retained their importance as political and administrative centers of the new Turkic polities: the former for the Danishmendids, the latter as the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate (De Luigi 2015, 3). In a sense, Amorium fell victim to the new settlement pattern

actively implemented by the Komnenian dynasty across the frontier as those settlements like Pergamon and Priene who faced the booming Aegean exchange network also experienced a resurgence of city-life (in demographic, economic, and building activities) (Fildhuth 2016, 254; Otten 2017, 230).

Nevertheless, for the whole period preceding the Anatolian "storm on horseback"[2] brought about by the Turks, Amorium represented one of the most important Byzantine cities in the region (Brandes 1999, 38–39). One can regard it as truly exceptional because it was a fortified center of the imperial administration: inhabited by an army garrison, civic officials, and ecclesiastical elites, frequented by merchants and pilgrims as well as bragging a bustling economic life and craftsmanship. In this light, it could fit many of the above-mentioned patterns of urban development like Brandes's survival of the few fittest (cities), or Foss' ruralization and castralization of urban settlements post or Niewöhner's eleventh-century caesura of Anatolian urbanism following. In truth, Amorium does not fully belong to any of those. Much more than this, it functioned as an important center for artisanal production, a commercial hub, and a major source of both skilled and casual labor (Lightfoot 2007, 286). In a way that reminds us of Euchaita, Amorium's exceptional economic resilience was not entirely based on the state and its demand. Amorium shows that commercial and artisanal activities could be found not only in coastal cities and that elites (imperial and not) can remain substantially urban-oriented (Cheynet 2017, 460). In other words, Amorium was not simply a parasitic regional capital benefitting from imperial sponsorship and military organization (Ivison 2001); moreover, its urban landscape, planning, and fabric were not limited by the walled enceinte. Amorium pays the heeds to a new ideological and structural concept of the city, which we could see expressed and realized in Justiniana Prima (Caričin Grad) in the Balkans. The city was sponsored and promoted as the birth-place of Emperor Justinian I in the mid-sixth century. A clear zoning system was implemented in terms of planning, and urban fabric since three rings of ramparts (upper, lower and eastern line of defense) were meant to exalt and single out the administrative and ecclesiastical focus of the city (upper city walls), a set of religious centers, public amenities and residential buildings (lower city walls), and finally two large suburbs (one of which was densely urbanized) (Ivanišević 2016, 116–21). Amorium was obviously less an "artificial" urban center than Justinian Prima and lasted well beyond the latter's demise in the mid-seventh century; however, in my opinion, it clearly points to a particular

interpretation of those manifestations that Zanini (2016) and Quiroga (2016) have singled out as typical of the post-Late Antique Byzantine city: Christianization of urban spaces, pronounced militarization of its landscape and topography of power, demonumentalization as a consequence of the demographic downturn as well as the abandonment of the classic street grid.

In Amorium, the resilience and rebuilding of the Lower City church and the presence of the so-called Enclosure with its artisanal installation, as paired with ceramic and numismatic evidence, project an image of a bustling and dense urban landscape that reminds (at least in part) of early-Islamic cities in Syria and Palestine like Jerash, Pella or Schythopolis/Bet Shean (Walmsley 2007, 76–107). Here, archaeological evidence uncovered in the last few decades help us to see the sheer diversity of urban environments with the maintenance of Greco-Roman concepts and civic traditions and the introduction of new ideas concerning town planning and urban fabric in a way that can be traced in Amorium.

Amorium demonstrates the perils of pronounce the demise of urbanism in the absence of good archaeology, but also a starting point to rethink other interpretative paradigms to post-classical urbanism;: away from the coast any site on the plateau with good communication and support from the fiscal administration could have coped as well as Amorium (Dey 2015, 201). Indeed, some actually did, although with a less dense settlement pattern as the one documented for the lower city of Amorium. As I have extensively referred to Euchaita already, I will briefly mention here Ancyra, which was the capital of a theme (Opsikion and later Bucellarion) (Haldon 2010, 68) with a rather important Late Antique past and seems to have shared similar urban trajectories as Amorium.

As already mentioned, Ancyra was used by Foss (1980) as a clear example of urban retrenchment in the Byzantine Dark Ages. A recent reassessment of the archaeological evidence and the phases of construction of the imposing ramparts have led to abandon the idea that a fortified city was in decline (Serin 2011; Peschlow 2015, 2017b). In fact, the construction of defensive walls is probably evidence of a certain degree of civic vitality with an outer and inner circuit crowing the acropolis of the Roman city (Serin 2011, 1270–2). The inner rampart was endowed with an elaborate bastion as both should be dated to the mid-seventh century and were restored when the city was hit by the same Abbasid raid, which later wreaked havoc to Amorium. The Arab raid of 838 seems to have caused extensive destruction and soon after Michael III had the ruins of the ancient city walls

destroyed and a citadel built in its place (Peschlow 2017b, 360). In a rather similar vein as Amorium, the large scale building activity sponsored by the Imperial court and (possibly) executed by the army, is boasted by a series of inscriptions celebrating both local, thematic governors as well as the Emperor himself as *polistés* (founder of the city) (Serin 2011, 1273; Peschlow 2015, 263–72); the citadel's commanding ramparts were decorated with a large number of spolia taken from old Roman buildings which clearly betray the kind of combined expedient and ideological functions already documented for Thessalonike.

Even though we do not have the same amount of archaeology and material culture available for Amorium (Ancyra has been continuously occupied and experienced a real-estate boom since it was chosen as the capital of the Republic of Turkey in 1923), it is possible to point to a series of urban activities and function which were pursued outside the hilltop fortifications. In a way that reminds us again of Amorium, the large Baths of Caracalla seemed to have remained in use until the eighth century, as some urban churches and monasteries are documented for the late-seventh century (Peschlow 2017b, 353–4). A local pilgrimage site was developed around the martyrion (and possibly the tomb) of a local saint (Clemens) (Foss 1980, 64b). Although currently little is left of it, a church seems to have been built on it already in the Dark Ages and rebuilt after its destruction in the early ninth century. The layout and building technique of this second phase (cross-inscribed church with a ribbed pumpkin dome) reveals some similarities with like the eighth-century Church of the *Koimesis* (Dormition of the Virgin) in Nicaea, as well as mid-ninth and tenth-century churches Myraleion in Constantinople and Dereağzı in Lycia (Serin 2011, 1279; Peschlow 2017b, 356). Finally, it looks like a religious center developed and remained frequented to the east of the fortified hilltop, where the renowned Temple of Augustus was partially converted into a church (Serin 2018). The conversion seems to have taken place in the Late Antique period, although the only available evidence is represented by two inscriptions of an abbot and *tourmarchos* (a mid-rank thematic official) dated to the ninth century when possibly a wall of smaller stones and large ashlar blocks was built around the ecclesiastical complex (Peschlow 2017b, 354).

It is possible to draw some parallels between the fate of Amorium and Ancyra thematic capital, which remained frequented well into the eleventh century, although, for the modern capital of Turkey, the post-ninth century period is badly documented (Foss 1980, 80–85). It seems possible to

conclude that if Ancyra developed an impressive walled outlook with two sets of walls and later a citadel, some of its urban functions were pursued outside the hilltop. In fact, the latter word is deceiving because it does not refer to a small crest but rather to a large plateau that was six times bigger than the upper citadel of Amorium (Ivison 2001, 17).

This being so, Ancyra could remind us of Amastris on the Paphlagonian coast of the Black Sea; here, the construction of a tripartite set of walls modeled around the Constantinopolitan defenses protected the access to the western and eastern harbors and enclosed at least two churches (and possibly the episcopal palace) (Zavagno 2012, 279). These walls were erected in three phases encompassing the period between the end of the seventh to twelfth centuries (Crow and Hill 1995); they fortified the isthmus and cut off part of the Roman city and were connected to a sort of large walled citadel on the adjoining island of Boz Tepe via a bridge protected by a barbican (Crow 2017a, 389–90). Nevertheless, they should not be regarded as tantamount to a complete militarization of urban life as another island (Tavşan Adası) hosted a monastic community (Zavagno 2012, 275–77). Literary sources (the late-ninth century Life of Saint George of Amastris) seem to point to the presence of a pilgrimage center outside the walled city. Moreover, the harbors seem to have lodged bustling commercial mountainous landscape; a new theme (*katepanate*) of Paphlagonia was created in 820s as a response to the first naval incursions of the Rhos. Like in Ancyra, Amastris boasts sigillographic evidence pointing to a large number of thematic officers and the so-called kommerkiarioi in charge of providing the navy detachment with supply and logistical support (Zavagno 2009, 147–9). Local economic activities are documented by the range and distribution of locally produced amphorae as well as documents attesting the role of the city in the Black Sea slave market (Crow 2017a, 394). Indeed, Byzantine amphorae originated at Amastris were found in large quantities along the northern Pontic coast, although it is not yet clear which type of commodities were carried in it (nuts?) (Laflı and Kan Şahin 2015, 108). This is further enhanced by a late ninth-century seal belonging to one Niketa Basiliko *spatharios kai diokete Amastridos* found in Cherson as pointing to the shipping of crops between Amastris and Crimea (Aleksenko 2003, 80).

Like Ancyra and Amorium, Amastris experienced significant transformations in its institutional, administrative and military role in the ninth century, although it never bears the full brunt of any Arab raid as shielded by the Paphlagonian mountain range and rugged landscape. To the

contrary of the rather dense urban landscape of Amorium, in Amastris and Ancyra, the elaborate and imperially sponsored sets of walls seem to have acted as an urban reference point for scattered *extra-moenia* settlements; this reminds us of Euchaita, where churches and even parts of the classical monuments survived outside the upper city walls. More important, if Amastris clearly benefitted from the shipping routes connecting Paphlagonia with Constantinople, Amorium and Ancyra were "within easy communication of each other as they protected the southern and northern approach to the capital" (Foss 1980, 74).

In this light, it is important to notice that another impressive urban circuit of walls endowed the city Nicaea (see Fig. 3.3) which became a thematic capital when the Opsikion was reduced in the 760 s (Treadgold 1997, 406). Although repeatedly hit by Arab raids, Nicaea never fell to the Arabs. It was from Nicaea that the *strategós* commanded a network of outer defensive strongholds, including Doryleum and Kotayon (Foss 2003, 252, Angold 2003b, 27). The Late Antique five-kilometer-long

Fig. 3.3 Nicaea and its plain

enceinte boasting massive towers were continuously renovated from the early eighth century until the arrival of the Turks (Peschlow 2017a, 206–7). The walls were well-kept for they sheltered the city from the raid that caused the temporarily fall of Ancyra and Amorium to the Arabs. Foss (2003, 253). In a similar vein as in the other two capitals, an extensive program of restoration was carried out by Michael III, as proved by inscriptions still surviving on the walls. Indeed, Nicaea walls were still an insurmountable obstacle for the Crusaders, for the city surrendered only when Byzantine ships managed to be transported into the lake on the shore of which the city stood (Demirkent 2003, 127). Indeed, Strabo already described the presence of the Lake Askania, the surrounding fertile plain of Bithynia, as well as the rectangular plan of the city and its four gates as peculiar to the city. The gates were rebuilt in the first century as two of them were replaced by triumphal arches (Foss 2003, 249). In the third century, they were incorporated into the large walls I referred to above; the circuit enclosed the orthogonal street plan with the Cardus and Decumanus intersecting where the Church of Hagia Sophia was built sometime in the fifth century (Peschlow 2003, 202; Peschlow 2017a, 209) it hosted the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 and served as the main Cathedral of the city until its final conquest by the Ottomans in 1331 (Inalcik 2003, 49).

The maintenance of the Classical street-grid (which divided the city into four quadrants) bears witness to the continuous frequentation of the urban landscape for the walls (repeatedly restored over time) refers to its political, administrative, and military importance for the whole period under scrutiny here (Foss 1996). Nicaea also had pride of place as a religious center, for it had been the seat of the First and Seventh Ecumenical Council. Leaving the urban planning aside, little is known of the actual urban fabric and landscape of the city as archaeology mainly focused on Classical amenities (like the theater that was turned into a quarry in the early Byzantine period) or religious buildings like the late seventh century-early eighth-century Koimesis monastic church (De Maffei 2003, 113–4). The recent discovery of a submerged basilica and cemetery outside the walled enceinte could possibly point to a memorial cult dedicated to Saint Neophytes, which may have remained active well into the eleventh century (Peschlow 2017a, 209) and which reminds us of the above-mentioned *extra-moenia* pilgrimage centers located in Euchaita, Amastris, and Ancyra. Both the Cathedral and the Dormition church went through restoration in the mid-eleventh century, where a series of earthquakes hit the city

(Peschlow 2003, 206). In the same period, a series of urban monasteries and cemeterial churches started being built inside the walls, possibly pointing to a rather denser landscape and urban fabric. This pairs with the increased political and military role Nicaea played in this period.

Bithynia always had an extraordinary strategic importance along the communication routes leading to central Anatolia (Belke 2017, 19–22). From the mid-tenth century onwards, however, the region became the longed prize for those members of the so-called "Anatolian military aristocracy" who started rebelling rebelled against the Emperor. In fact, the so-called clash between a civilian and military aristocracy as the lands owned by the latter never reached enough a critical mass to challenge the state (Kaldellis 2017, 224–28). Nevertheless, in the very case of provincial cities, the economic prosperity and imperial largess documented for the period had made local secular and ecclesiastical elites wealthier and prone to sponsor a boom of construction. In Nicaea, the main Bithynian city, this is visible courtesy of both the abovementioned church building activities and the peak in the production of high-quality local pottery (Polychrome Ware) also made in Constantinople. This type of ceramics found its way to Corinth, Cherson, and even central Asia as well as the Aegean and therefore point to commercialization underpinned by elite demand (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 76). As Angold (2003b, 29) concludes, eleventh-century Bithynia was indeed a region where the very Constantinopolitan elite had interests and investments.

However, upon the arrival of the Seljuks and later the Crusaders and after the accession of the Komnenian dynasty Nicaea became a border city across the abovementioned frontier between Byzantium and the Turks. It also turned into a launching pad for the repeated Byzantine campaigns staged by Alexios, John II, and Manuel Komnenos, although the latter amounted to reprisals for Turkmen raids on imperial territory, whereas an effective *modus vivendi* had been established with the Seljuk sultans based in Iconium (tod. Konya) (Magdalino 1993, 125). Indeed, Manuel created the new theme of Neokastra (south-west of the Nicaea) vis-à-vis the Seljuks and even restored the walls of Nicaea, which -according to Niketas Choniates- was the center of a Bithynian rebellion against Andronikos Komnenos in 1183 (*Annals*, 269–70). Turkish troops also joined the rebels for one immediately could recognize a feature of frontier life which will characterize the relationships between the Empire of Nicaea and the Seljuks (and later the Byzantines and Ottomans): local cooperation against central authority (Angold 2003b, 33).

Nicaea thrived and prospered in the thirteenth century as the Byzantine emperors, and the Constantinopolitan Patriarch resided in the city between 1204 and 1261, and notwithstanding the silence of material culture and (partially) urban archaeology for the period between the seventh and the eleventh century, it seems to have experienced a resilient urban life in economic, political, military, administrative and religious terms. However, the urban settlement pattern and demographic structure were again less dense than in Amorium and more in tune with a set of foci of settlement "swimming" within the large space massive Late Antique walls. In fact, the fortifications as well as the orthogonal street-grid planning, render Nicaea quite unique among the abovementioned provincial capitals. If in the other thematic centers, city life often regarded the walls as redundant (and more prominently so from the mid-ninth century on), in Nicaea, all the urban functions have always been easily accommodated within the large walled urban space in a way that reminds us of the different "urban" landscapes in Constantinople where the space between the Theodosian was indeed dotted by farmsteads and cisterns and innervated by some ceremonial routes, as opposed to the heavily and densely built areas within the Constantinian walls (Magdalino 2007). Nevertheless, one could object, Nicaea remains an example of a city whose economy, political relevance, administrative functionality, and religious primacy were mainly based on its importance in the eyes of the imperial court and military and fiscal machinery as they supported the resilience of urban fabric and landscape. Indeed, and in tune with the conclusion of this Anatolian section, it is time to move to some non-capital cities in order to test some of the developments and transformations experienced by thematic capitals.

Here, the best example is represented by Ephesos (see Fig. 3.4), to which I have already and repeatedly referred to in the previous chapter; this owes to the fact that it has been one of the longest and best excavated (as well as extensively published) Anatolian sites (Ladstätter 2019, 11–17). Ephesos sits on the western coastal plain of the Anatolian peninsula. Growing in the shade of two hills, the city boasted a rich port (Ladstätter 2017, 244–5; 2019, 27–8). Indeed, post-Late Antiquity Ephesos suffered from fragmentation and simplification of the long-exchange system, decline in imports, localization of the sets of production and distribution (as shown by dramatic diminution of coin-finds and regionalization ceramic production) without however witnessing a catastrophic collapse of urban life (Zavagno 2009, 95–128). For Ephesos, traditional historiography envisioned a path of decline, shrinking, and duplication of the

Fig. 3.4 Ephesos (View of the harbour from the so-called Curetes Street)

ancient city. According to Foss (1979), the building of the fortifications on the hill of Ayasoluk, during the seventh- and eighth-century Arab raids (on land and sea), together with the silting up of the harbor and the abandonment of the Episcopal complex of St. Mary, brought about the slow demographic and economic decline of the ancient lower city; meanwhile, in the late seventh century Ephesos was endowed with a new walled enceinte which, apparently in a careless way, set aside the two/third of the old urban landscape, incorporating buildings like the theatre and the stadium. Two different urban-like foci came to the fore: the old city landscape, which lay in ruins, and the hill of Ayasoluk where the Justinian's great basilica built over the burial of Saint John and a later fortification, enhanced its role as successor of the Classic Ephesos.

In fact, the so-called Byzantine city walls have been recently reassessed by the main excavators based upon the epigraphic evidence: "if one considers the fortification circuit it is immediately clear that it is no hastily erected wall of spolia but instead is a solid circuit [for] there is no need to

assume it was constructed in response to an immediate invasion […] The wall must therefore be understood as a prestigious primary building and not to as a protective answer to a threat scenario" (Ladstätter 2019, 39). This being so, we are encouraged once again to reassess the role of fortifications in the abovementioned capital cities as fortified circuits were meant to enhance the administrative and military centers of power as well as (occasionally) acting as a shelter for the population living outside the walls. In contrast, the ecclesiastical center of the city seems to have moved to the hill of Ayasoluk, which also turned into an important pilgrimage center on a par with the so-called Cave of the Seven Sleepers and the Tomb of Saint Luke (Zimmerman 2019). This implied the erection of a second enceinte around Saint John basilica through the systematic spoliation of the seats of the Classical theater; however, the Church of Saint Mary next to the harbor seems to have remained the main church of the city as it was refurbished in the eighth century. It is also possible that the fortification lodged a military garrison, notwithstanding the fact that Ephesos was never elevated to the rank of thematic capital and therefore not a priority for the Byzantine state (Ladstätter 2019, 58–60).

The transformation of the city into a pilgrimage center is further enhanced by the travels of Willibald and Thomas of Farfa in the eighth century and the ninth-century tags of eastern relics as those preserved in Sens, as well as the abovementioned late eighth-century panegyrion of Saint John; these point to a continuity of the role of Ephesos along the shipping trade-routes in the seventh and eighth century and beyond (McCormick 2001, 283–318; 593; Brandes 1989, 55–62); a continuity also reinstated by resilient communications along the ancient sea-trunk linking the Aegean with Italy and the Tyrrhenian sea, with its harbor and the channel connecting it to the sea surviving the dramatic silting process (Dalanay 2019, 119–21). Indeed, material culture, although substantial, does not allow us to provide a full picture of the urban landscape in the transitional period. Nevertheless, the analysis of coins and seals as well as ceramics has pointed to a continuous frequentation of the Upper Agora and the porticoed road connecting the so-called Market Agora with the harbor (*Arkadianè*). Moreover, a residential quarter with narrow and windy streets covering the area of the former Temple of Adrian has been excavated and revealed a settlement horizon from the eighth to the ninth centuries (Ladstätter 2017, 247).

Recent publications focusing on urban archaeology in a specific section of the city (the so-called Hanghäuser or Terrace Houses) and globular

amphorae as yielded in different urban areas allow us to pierce through the perceived barrier of the Dark Ages and hint at Ephesos as production as and consumption center. On the one hand, excavations at the Terrace House 2 (along the road connecting the upper and the lower/Market agora) have documented the conversion of a former lavishly decorated urban Roman villa into a residential and artisanal quarter which remained frequented in the middle and late Byzantine period (Ladstätter 2013, 100–1). The concentration of metal finds and semi-finished products point to metalworking workshops which could be linked to a large collection of pectoral crosses (Pültz 2019). Pottery finds, coins and also later burials that yielded into the buildings, point to the area being still frequented in the middle and late Byzantine period as the latest finds dated to the fourteenth century (Ladstätter 2013, 100–1). On the other hand, the aforementioned distributive pattern of globular amphorae further bespeaks of the continued vitality of the local harbor as well as commercialization of the local hinterland's agricultural produce. In this light, Ephesos' role across Aegean and trans-Mediterranean shipping routes makes it part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine* I repeatedly referred to. In this sense, the shrinkage of the city, the ruralization of parts of the classic urban landscape, the importance of the city across pilgrimage routes, and the survival of (religious and not) foci of settlements within the two walled enceintes as well as the vitality of the harbor all point to an adaptation of the city to the changing political, military and administrative priorities of the Byzantine state. It seems rather as if the inhabitants broke with the Antiquity and used the hiatus of the Dark Ages to dispose of those structures which were in disrepair or constituted an hindrance to the process of urban adaptation to the historical needs of a new era (Ladstätter 2019, 61).

The new realities fully materialized in the tenth and eleventh century, during which numismatic and sigillographic evidence point to the increased importance (as ecclesiastical and pilgrimage center) of the hill of Ayasoluk as well as a development of the areas at its foot. Other pilgrimage sites (the tomb of Saint Luke and House of the Virgin) also attracted visitors (as enhanced by a large score of graffiti). Moreover, the harbor plain was exploited for cultivation and storage purposes, although large areas of the lower city were abandoned (Ladstätter 2017, 247). The impression is one of a rather less cohesive and more ruralized settlement pattern (Caner Yüksel 2019, 14–15). The analysis of the pottery yielded in the area of Ayasoluk (former Artemision) as well as in other areas of the city have shown concentrations of Constantinopolitan Glazed White Wares (I and

II) dated to the seventh to the eleventh century, as well as late eleventh-twelfth century Aegean Painted Wares and Incised Sgraffito wares depicted with motifs inspired by the epic of Digenis Akritas. The latter pottery had a rather large distributive areal, including Crimea, the Peloponnese, and western Anatolian cities like Pergamon (Vroom 2019, 239–40). It is, therefore, clear from the analysis of pottery that Middle Byzantine Ephesos was importing decorative tableware in substantial quantities from the Aegean as these paired with the wine amphorae from the Marmara region I have referred to in Chap. 2. This points to a regionalization of the commercial and productive horizons of the city, in tune with the increasingly pivotal role played by the Aegean in terms of demand, distribution, and market economy for the international and interregional trade was now based on the southern Anatolian coast (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 132).

Here, urban centers like Lymira and Patara in Lycia, as well as Side and (as repeatedly hinted at) Attalia, offer a good example of the aforementioned open cities (often located on peninsulas or islands) as highly accessible entry points which Shepard (2017, 32) has described as "designating geopolitical givens and population concentrations in which Byzantium had state, economic or occasionally ideological interest." Side remained a bishopric until the end of the ninth century, and coin fonds indicated continuous trade (although on a reduced scale). An impressive set of walls was also erected as generically dated to the Invasion period. Like in Ephesos, the enceinte was not built in a careless or hastily way, for it boasts a rather deliberate use of spolia as well as military architectural design. Moreover, the city boasted three churches, two of which were located outside the walls and indicated some settlement activity (Pjesker 2017, 299–300). However, if Vincenzo Ruggeri (1995, 2009) regarded Side as an example of persisting Byzantine *urbanitas,* excavators have recently expressed a more cautious judgment about its urban character. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Side and its harbor retained a certain role as a trade and religious center, while its impressive walls possibly point to a conspicuous investment on the part of the state authorities.

Another example of an urban coastal site for which both the architectural evidence and the analysis of pottery types have been essential to shed light on its surprisingly active economic life in the period between the seventh and eleventh century is Limyra on the coast of Lycia (Foss 1994; Vroom 2007; Seyer et al. 2017). Located some two miles from the sea, this site covers a substantial territory with an acropolis, several cemeteries, and a lower city where the sixth-century Byzantine walls formed two

enclosures on the western and eastern sides of the stream Limyros, which separates the sites into two parts. For Limyra, where excavations have yielded a large score of seventh-to-ninth century globular amphorae, fine wares, and cooking wares imported from the Near East, Egypt, Southern Anatolia, and Cyprus (Vroom 2005, 249–53).

Indeed, Side and Limyra could be ideally paired with the nearby city of Patara, where a set of fortifications were erected sometime in the sixth or seventh century (Ruggeri 2009). These walls -as Peschlow (2017c, 286) states- "do not appear to have been built hastily as might have happened in the face of an imminent threat: they were clearly built with care and meant to impress.[…] They fortified the city center next to the harbor bay." Outside the city walls, foci of settlement developed around important ecclesiastical buildings like the so-called harbor church. On the contrary to Lymira, in Patara, material culture has not been fully analyzed or published. Nevertheless, Patara boasts a tenth-to-twelfth century intense building activity as witnessed by the rebuilding of local fortifications, numerous churches (including one close to the harbor), two chapels, and other -still understudied- buildings (Peschlow 2017c, 287–89).

Finally, Attaleia, whose military and political importance was epitomized by the abovementioned impressive set of walls as restored under strict imperial supervision in the mid-ninth century. As the main urban center along the southern coast of Anatolia, Attaleia was, however, not simply the seat of the local s*tratēgós*. Indeed, and rather in with the continuous frequentation and importance of the walled harbors of Patara and Lymira across the eastern Mediterranean shipping routes, a ninth-century hagiography shed light on expedient forms of political interactions which transcended the religious divide. Indeed, the Life of Saint Anthony the Younger mentions the negotiations between the *stratēgós* sitting in Attaleia and an Arab admiral sieging the city in 820. The dialogue between the two officers shows an absence of any feeling similar to those driving the crusade or the *jihād*. On the contrary, everyone seems to be familiar with a maritime borderland between Byzantium and the Caliphate, a bridge and a region with its own customs and rules (Lilie 2005, 18–19).

In the light of the abovementioned evidence, it seems possible to asserts that the urban coastal network of city-harbors dotting the southern-coast of Anatolia remained frequented and economically active because of the Constantinopolitan fiscal machinery and the detachement of the imperial fleet based in Attaleia; nevertheless, the latter as well as other sites boasting impressive fortifications, also clearly acted as catalysts for the Byzantine

trade and commercial relation with the eastern Mediterranean regions under the Ummayad, Abbasid and (from the tenth century on) the Fatimid Caliphate. In tune with a conclusive remark of this section, I would like to drive three final points concerning the regional and sub-regional trajectories of Byzantine urbanism in Anatolia.

First, the examples of Attaleia, Amorium, and Amastris, should alert us to the effect that although thematic capitals had pride of place in the survival of urban life in Anatolia, the tempo of urban functions, fabric, planning, size, and structure were substantially but not fully dictated by the need of the imperial state and its fiscal machinery. Cities like Ephesos, Patara, and Side remind us of the fact that fortifications were but one of the functional characters and conceptual representation of a new typology of urbanism. If one can assert that imperial elites underpinned the economic vitality of capitals, it is nevertheless true that they were way more than fortified parasitic centers of consumption but betrayed productive activities which paired with their importance as pilgrimage centers (Ephesos) or commercial hubs (Patara and Side). Even for sites where urban life seemed to have partially disappeared (like in Sagalassos or Hierapolis) in the transitional period only to resurface in the late ninth century, analysis of settlement patterns and material culture draws a rather more complex picture.

For Sagalassos in Pisidia, a real shift in the dynamics of urban settlement seems to have predicated upon the emergence of a *kastra* across the regions. One of these Pisidian *kastra* was built on the so-called Alexander Hill in Sagalassos and remained the focus of administrative, ecclesiastical, and military functions (Poblome et al. 2017, 305–7). Indeed, analysis of pottery assemblages as yielded in different areas of the former classical city have pointed less to a seventh-to-ninth century decline in trade than a local response to a general changing economic system, environmental challenges, and an emerging local pottery tradition (Poblome et al. 2010; Vionis 2020). This not to deny that the landscape and fabric of Sagalassos morphed in ruralized and village-like foci of settlement across the once larger cityscape. Large restorations of buildings, erection of churches, numismatic and sigillographic evidence as well as common wares and locally-made (and imported) Glazed wares bespeak of a resurgence of the site from the ninth century till its demise in the early thirteenth century (Poblome et al. 2017, 308–11).

Hierapolis, in Phrygia Pacatiana, never played an important political, administrative and fiscal role as a provincial capital. However, and

following a catastrophic earthquake, the seventh-to-ninth century city developed along "islands of settlement" lines with (poorly built) residential areas scattered around the city linked by a relatively well-preserved road network (Arthur 2006b, 46–7; 128; 151). A number of churches (like the one built within the shell of the former cathedral) were also rebuilt and restored in this period as at some stage; a defensive wall was erected to define an enclosure which reminds us of those built in the lower city of Amorium and Ancyra (around the church of the Temple of Augustus) (Arthur 2012b, 283). Moreover, although the complex public water supply broke down, drinking water points located along with the surviving road system and a series of open water channels continued to supply the local population and, in all evidence, supported a level of artisanal vitality as pointed out both by stone cutting activity, locally-made glass and metal-work objects, and local production of quite high-standard types of pottery.

These have been proved as circulating within the town between the mid-seventh and tenth century (Arthur 2012b, 284); they also betrayed stylistic and morphological parallels with Aegean productions documented in Aegina, Emporion, and Chios. Their distribution pattern included the Lycos valley and Western Anatolia as far as Lymira (Cottica 2007). It is possible that -at least partially- these economic activities related to the importance of Hierapolis as a pilgrimage site for the city hosted the martyrion of Saint Philip (as the saint also appeared on an eleventh-century lead-seal) (Arthur 2012b, 286). Hierapolis was hit by a catastrophic earthquake in the mid-tenth century and seemed to have preserved only faint traces of residences, artisanal production, and religious building activities, with the city surviving as a fortified outpost in a Seljuk-Turkmen sea from the second half of the eleventh century onwards (Arthur 2006a, 15–18).

The example of Sagalassos and Hierapolis should help me to drive a second point home. Following the trajectories of cities simply in terms of the development of "tangible" urban fabric and structures can be deceiving. Rather we should always be aware of the functions the city pursued; for these functions were not mutually inclusive (or exclusive), as they adapted and responded to local, regional geographical, and environmental features, the socio-political inputs sent by the fiscal, administrative and military imperial machinery as well as local-provincial elites and ecclesiastical hierarchy, and, finally, their changing position across land and above all sea-routes. These all impinged on level of local demand, productive structures, and patterns of consumption at urban level and shaped urban life

within and beyond walled enceinte. In fact, as exemplified by pompously celebrated (in twelfth-century panegyrics and literary sources) “cities” like Anchyraous and Lopadion (Ioannoupolis), fortifications were less an effective defensive apparatus than a visual and ideological imperial statement (in this case the part of John II Komnenos) (Lau 2016). In this case, we are confronted with a strategic military headquarter protecting a vital bridge across the Sangarios river and not a magnificent and sturdy city -like contemporary (to John II) author Theodore Prodromos makes us believe (Hörandner 1984). Lopadion did not function but as part of a military, hierarchically planned and fortified settlement pattern along the frontier with the Seljuk Sultanate, and one can only pair it with those centers which -although central to the army or the navy and to the fiscal machinery of the state- continued to fulfill manifold functions using their wall as a parading coat of arms in the same vein as they boasted patron saints as supernatural protectors as driving force for their resilient sociopolitical religious and economic life.

Third, one should consider how Anatolia remains central to any discourse concerning the developments of Byzantine urbanism and its archaeology since the 1970s. We have come a long way since Vryonis Jr. and Foss, as enhanced by the attention given to Byzantine layers and material culture in different urban settlements as well as by the spectacular results yielded by Amorium. Indeed, the recent interpretative framework proposed by Niewöhner (2017a), which already referred to, has the merit of contextualizing the changes to Anatolian urbanism until the arrival of the Turks in Anatolia and even beyond. In this light, it is not only the transitional period (or the Dark Ages) to be the focus of investigation (as Brandes (1989) implies), but rather the importance some of those cities played between the ninth and twelfth century when the Byzantine armies pushed the border back beyond the Taurus and Anti-Taurus mountain. The new urban settlement pattern developing in the Komnenian era is a good example of this. Fortified sites and new thematic regions along the internal valley of the Maeander river opposed to urban settlements (Pergamon and Priene) that experienced a decisive economic and demographic revival benefitting from the economic centrality of the Aegean exchange network for Constantinople from the tenth century onwards. It is to the latter region I am now moving to, for it represented the second pillar of the Byzantine heartland and showing peculiar trends of urbanism in a diachronic perspective.

3.2 Urbanism in the Aegean Heartland

Examining the urbanism in the Peloponnese, and the Aegean Sea, means first and foremost, dealing with a fragmented landscape. On the one hand, the limestone mountains covering most of contemporary Greece with only a few plains supporting urban centers like Corinth, Athens, Thessalonike, and Thebes (Wickham 2005, 31); on the other hand, the pulverized insular landscape composed by three sets of archipelagos (Cyclades, Sporades, and the Dodecanese). Here, the historical trajectories of Byzantine urbanism presents us with some peculiar occurrences: one has to do with the abovementioned invasions (or better migrations) of the Sklaveni (Slavs) from the late-sixth century onwards; the second concerns the arrival of the Arabs in the Aegean (as they hopped on some of the islands to siege Constantinople in the late seventh and early eighth century) and the Byzantine military response to it with the creation of the naval theme of the Kybirrhaiotes and the strengthening of sites along the coast (Corinth and Thessalonike) and straits (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018, 49–50); the third stems from the aforementioned economic (as well as military and political) pivotal tole the Aegean had for Constantinople from the fall of Crete (in 820 s) till the fall of Constantinople in 1204 which clearly led to the creation of bustling productive and commercial quarters in cities like Thebes and Athens; last but not least, in this part of the Byzantine heartland, one can pit the transformation of urbanism and its functions in classical cities against newly built settlement like Monemvasia and Kastro Apalirou both expressing a rather different idea and ideal of city.

In this section, I will therefore briefly follow the trajectories of three types of cities: those which remain large metropolis or thematic capitals like Corinth and Thessalonike, cities with a rather prestigious past that survived the Dark Ages and re-emerged as centers of the bustling Aegean economy in the ninth century (Thebes and Athens) and finally the abovementioned newfangled coastal (and insular) settlements.

Thessalonike is a rather obvious starting point. As already mentioned, the second city of the Empire has been the focus of several historical, archaeological, and architectural studies, and it presents us with a diachronic coverage on the part of literary sources (seventh-century miracles of Saint Demetrios, ninth and tenth-century hagiographies account of the 904 Arab sack on the part of John Kaminiates, the twelfth-century narrative of the Norman sack of the city by Bishop Eusthatios, and the

contemporary Timarion) (Tourta 2013). Thessalonike was surrounded by an elaborate defensive structure (see Fig. 3.5). Kaminiates described it as "a city of considerable dimensions and encompassed an ample territory. The parts of the wall that face land are extremely well fortified and of massively thick construction, with a complete system of outworks maintaining an additional safe area and are everywhere reinforced by a series of wall towers and battlements so as to leave the inhabitants no occasion for fear. But the part that faces south is low and totally unequipped to deal with a military threat" (*Capture*, 15).

The massive enceinte should be regarded as a sort of "ontological" characterization of the city both architecturally and archaeologically. In other words, and like in Nicaea, Attaleia, and, of course, Constantinople, they define and conclude the city both in terms of the urban fabric and imaginary (Bakirtzis 2010). Kaminiates and Eusthatios' descriptions allow us to assert that the city had an upper city-wall (so-called acropolis) whose ramparts betrayed two phases of construction: the first (endowed with triangular towers) harking back to a period prior to the reign of Justinian when also a large cistern was built; in the second stage, dated to the first

Fig. 3.5 Thessalonike (the walls)

half of the seventh century, rectangular towers were added in most of the intervals between the triangular towers. Sometimes in the twelfth century, a citadel (*Heptapyrgion*) was added on the summit of the acropolis (*Capture*, 173). On the occasion of both sieges (and captures) of the city, the acropolis seems to have acted (or at least intended to) as a last-ditch of defense for the local populations; however, its ramparts never fulfill this role.

The city was protected by an enceinte which originally dated to the Hellenistic era but was further restored in the Roman and Late Antique periods; more important, it was further strengthened in the late sixth and after a catastrophic earthquake in 620 s when the harbor was also fortified. These ramparts never changed in terms of plan and size across the whole period under scrutiny here (Spieser 1999). Indeed, seismic activities and repeated Avar-Slav threats (as recounted in the miracles of Saint Demetrius) characterized the urban life until the end of the seventh century (Tourta 2013, 81–3); in particular, the destructive earthquakes brought about extensive change to the urban fabric, as many buildings fell in ruins. However, the archaeological data, along with written sources of the period from the seventh to the turn of the tenth centuries point to the continuity of the urban life (Raptis 2015, 244). As in the case of Nicaea, the intra-mural space was large enough to accommodate most of the population and their needs, for agricultural and artisanal activities are documented inside the walls (Bakirtzis 2007, 105–6). Indeed, and again in a way that reminds us of Nicaea, the ramparts of the city encompassed the orthogonal Classic street-grid – dominated by two parallel *decumani*. The first was the so-called *Mesé* or *Leoforos* linking the western Golden Gate with the opposite *Kassandreaia* Gate. It was a sort of urban tract of the Via Egnatia connecting Dyrrachium with Constantinople and flanked by important Christian buildings like the so-called Rotunda church (formerly part of a Tetrarchic palace) and the Panagia ton Chalkeon built on the site of the agora in 1028; the second, to the north of the *Leoforos*, was the street where the sanctuary dedicated to Saint Demetrios stood (Tourta 2013, 82).

The harbor also represented an essential marker of urban life of the city as endowed with large infrastructures and state granaries and surrounded by a fortified wall (Bakirtzis 2007, 94–5); Kaminiates describes it as "magnificent and deep, allowing mariners to bring in their ships in safety and berth them in an anchorage undisturbed by wind or wave, which its designer cut off from the rest of the sea." (*Capture*, 9). In truth, there was more than one port as the Miracles of Saint Demetrius recollect an

"ecclesiastical one" (possibly to the exclusive use of the local Church) and a second one further to the east (Bakirtzis 2007, 95). The harbor of Thessaloniki witnessed to the arrival of the first high official of the Karabisianoi (Jeffreys and Pryor 2006, 26; Cosentino 2008b, 602), regarded as the first regular Byzantine fleet established under Constant II (and possibly based on the island of Samos) in response to creation of a proper navy on the part of the Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya in the second half of the seventh century (Zuckerman 2005, 108–15; Curta 2011, 131). As the name Karabisianoi stems from the Greek word for boat (*καραβόν*) (Treadgold 1997, 315), the Miracles of St. Demetrius described how the *στρατηγός τών* Καράβων Sisinnios sailed along the east coast of Greece to lift the siege set on Thessaloniki by the Bulgarian kaghan Kouber in early 680 s (Lemerle 1979–81, II, 160–62). If sigillographic evidence has documented the presence in the area of the harbor of both kommerkiarioi as well as other custom officers whereas, prosopographic and epigraphic evidence have allowed to identify a set of buildings and gates piercing the harbor-wall which have been repeatedly restored in the second half of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century as sponsored by local ecclesiastical, military and administrative authorities (Muresu 2019, 109).

Together with the fertile hinterland, the ramparts, and the protection of Saint Demetrios, whose pilgrimage sanctuary and festival attracted visitors for across the Mediterranean, the harbor was indeed the key to the survival and prosperity of the city (Vryonis 1981, 202–4; Treadgold 1997, 406). Kaminiates offers the best reference to the bustling economic activity of the city with merchants provisioning of the city (*Capture*, 102–3). The city was continuously provisioned by sea before and after it became a thematic capital in the first half of the ninth century as local authorities were, however, also selling grain and salt as products of the fertile plain outside the city walls (Laiou 2002b, 701–3). Lead-seals of kommerkiarioi, from the second half of the eighth century, show that these officials had jurisdiction over Thessaly, Kephalonia, the theme of Thessalonike, and the west of Greece, hinting at the role of the city as a catalyst for economic integration of these regions (Oikonomides 1991, 986).

Thessalonike seems to have boasted two permanent markets as one apparently was frequented by the neighboring Slavic populations (Curta 2006, 207–8). Indeed, the city also depended for its provisioning to a considerable extent on the fertile hinterland providing it with grain, wine, fish, and meat as showed both by Kaminiates and the Timarion*;* the latter in particular describes the abovementioned festival of Saint Demetrius as a

large and specialized market, apparently for textiles and cattle, sheep, and pigs (Dagron 2002, 402). But the city was also a hub of the regional trade with Bulgaria and Macedonia. It was after more peaceful relations with the Bulgars were established starting from the late ninth century that Thessalonike reached new levels of power and prosperity (Raptis 2015, 237). Kaminiates states that "there was no material resource of which [Thessalonike] did not enjoy a superfluity – on the one hand, he abundance of agriculture, on the other the affluence of commerce." (*Capture*, 17–19).

In this period, there is also evidence of religious building activities as at least two churches were erected, and the large fifth-century Basilica of Hagia Sophia was also restored and turned into a smaller cross dome-type building. Located in the southeastern part of the city, the church seems to have functioned as the seat of the local Metropolitan. Monograms of Constantine VI and his mother Irene date the reconstruction to the late eighth century, although several phases of the mosaic decoration point to further restorations stretching into the late ninth century (Tourta 2013, 83). Other ecclesiastical buildings, as well as monastic institutions, dotted the urban landscape, like the Acheiropoietos on the *Leoforos-Mesé* also boasting a seventh-century restoration and housing a miraculous icon of the Hodegetria; the Akapniou monastery on the acropolis (dated to the early eleventh century); finally, the Monastery of Latomous whose *katholikon* was decorated with wall paintings in the second half of the twelfth century (Tourta 2013, 64). Eusthatios indeed crudely divided the population of the city into three groups: those who could fight, those who were not expected to take the arms (priests, women, and children), and those secluded from the world (monks) (*Capture*, 6–7). Since the eleventh century, Thessalonike boasted economic links with Athos and Patmos monasteries which contributed to the demographic boom, which led the city population to reach 150,000 in the twelfth century (Shea 2009, 266–7; Laiou 2002a, 50). Indeed, as Kameniates celebrated the market of Thessalonike, Eusthatios, on the contrary, blamed the fall of the city to the Normans on the "the immoderate and heavy interest charged on loans of no great size which burdened the helpless simple folk of the modest estate" (*Capture*, 155).

The recent Metro excavations have indeed shown the establishment of commercial outlets and workshops in the northern and southern areas; these remained frequented between the eighth and the fourteenth century (Vasileiadou and Tzebreni 2020). The consequences of the raid and sack

of Leo of Tripoli in 904 seem to have been simply a hiccup. Raptis (2015) has cogently documented all the references to intra-mural marketplaces: one seems to have been active since the eighth century not far from the *Kassandreaia* gate and set up as an open-air market partially occupying the area of the Rotunda and the ruins of the Tetrarchic palatial complex; a second commercial area developed in the middle of the urban tissue and along the *Leoforos-Mesé* which during the late ninth and the beginning of the tenth century was packed with merchants from all over the world, who were buying and selling both local and imported wares (Raptis 2015, 242). A trade organization was in place reflecting less state control than a division in specialized districts (Dagron 2002, 417).

Glass was manufactured in the city (Curta 2006, 205–8), and tenth-century *ergasteria* (workshops), referred to as *kaminia* (kilns), produced bricks, roof tiles, and good-quality pottery (Shea 2009, 284–7; Antonaras 2016, 118–9). Tenth-eleventh century white wares chafing dishes and mid-twelfth century Painted Fine Sgraffito wares exported across the Aegean are some of the ceramic-types produced in the city (Vassiliou 2016, 255). Potters and artisanal activities (including metalwork, stone, and marble cutting as well as clothing and silk production (Laiou 2002b, 740) benefitted from the survival of the Late Antique water supply system as well as a network of underwater cisterns like the one Eusthatios described as refurbished on the acropolis (*Capture*, 77). This network also supplied a bathhouse and the orchards endowing the religious, residential complex, as again mentioned by Eusthatios (*Capture*, 111). Numismatic evidence also bespeaks the activities of the local mint, whose wide circulation across the Balkans also points to the economic and political power and influence of the city (Curta 2016, 105).

So, we are confronted by an important, large and complex city as seen through its social fabric. Although state officials and high clergy retained a pivotal role from the tenth century on, as Shea (2009, 295–8) remarks, "the politicization of craft and occupational associations meant that Thessalonike was not dominated by any segment of its population: the archontes [local landowning elites] sometimes directing its fate [whereas] other times the people of Thessaloniki forced the *archontes* to include them in the decision-making process or exclude them from it." Rights to the city were finally granted to Renier of Montferrat when he married Maria, sister of Emperor Manuel Komnenos, in 1180. Renier was the brother of Boniface, one of the lords of the Fourth Crusade, who after 1204 (and upon an armed quarrel with the Latin Emperor Baldwin for the

possession of the city), saw the people of Thessaloniki accepting him as their King (Treadgold 1997, 712).

Although in a less pronounced manner, similar urban trajectories to those just drawn for Thessalonike could be documented for Corinth. Amelia Brown (2010) has cogently shown that the narrative portraying two pivotal cities in Imperial and later Christian administration simply turning into walled shelters from the natural or man-made storms of the transitional period is rather inaccurate. For both Thessalonike and Corinth, archaeology has shown clear although diminished levels of frequentation and urban activity in the seventh-to-ninth century, although for Corinth a peak of prosperity can be documented for the twelfth century (Sanders 2003; Decker 2016, 106). Indeed, it is important to notice that Corinth was instrumental to the development of Byzantine archaeology in Greece, for it was the first site to be systematically excavated and methodically published (Sanders 2002; Athanasoulis 2013, 192). Corinth was an important Roman city as Saint Paul famously preached Christianity in the city (as he also did in Thessalonike). Contrary to the latter, Corinth was not densely inhabited, and its walls encircled a lesser area, although their exact course and length still remain unclear (Brown 2010, 233; Sanders 2003, 395).

One should also note that Corinth built its urban fortune on its two harbors: one towards the west (Lechaion) eyeing the homonymous gulf; the second (Kenchreai) towards the east and perching above the Saronic Gulf. The city was strategically located on the main crossroads for trans-Mediterranean trade and retained a pivotal role along the abovementioned trunk route linking the Thyrrenian with the Aegean and Constantinople. Both Classic and medieval Corinth developed on the gently sloping plateau at the northern foot of the acropolis (Acrocorinth), eyeing the Gulf of Corinth. It boasted rich water sources and was surrounded by fertile soil, as well as high-quality porous stone for building material and clay for the production of pottery. For Corinth, it has been proposed a model of scattered foci of settlements in the former Classical city as surrounded by some satellite settlements (harbors and Acrocorinth) as protected by the Hexamilion Wall on the famous isthmus (whose fortification was strengthened by Justinian) (Gregory 1993; Athanasoulis 2013, 195–6).

In the sixth century the city experienced a boom of building activities centered around the Lechaion Road connecting the forum with the homonymous harbor where a large fifth-century basilica was located. As the colonnades and covered sidewalks flanking the road were carefully

maintained as the forum hosted the Cathedral and the Bishop's palace, the fate of the city was deeply bound to its role as capital of the Themes of Hellas and later Peloponnese (Dey 2015, 192–4). However, Decker (2016, 104) and Sanders (2003, 396) speak of meager evidence for civic, commercial, and building activity post-sixth century (as shown for instance by the abandonment of the forum left outside the walled circuit turned into a burial place (Sanders 2002, 648), Brown (2010, 235–6) and Dey (2015, 195) stress the continuous presence of substantial administrative, military and ecclesiastical elites. By focusing in particular on the Lechaion road and the so-called Panaya field (to the southeast of the forum), they propose a rather less bleak picture than the one based on the meager quantity of pottery and coins excavated in the forum. Indeed, archaeological excavations at Corinth has been focusing on a poor suburb and that the location of the commercial, administrative, and ecclesiastic center is still unknown (Sanders 2002, 648).

In fact, on the one hand, the Lechaion road never fell into serious disrepair as it was never abandoned or despoiled (Dey 2015, 195), whereas Glazed White Wares and a mid-eighth century Abbassid coin were yielded at Panaya Field (Vroom 2017a, 177–8; Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018, 42). The recently documented network of globular amphorae also included Corinth and presents us with a picture of a closely matching material culture to the coastal and insular Byzantine *koine*, although with closer and more direct contacts to Constantinople, Athens, and the Aegean world (Arthur 2012a, b, 348–52). Some churches remained frequented, although reduced in size, like the Basilica of Lechaion where a little chapel was built in one of the apses; others were built anew like the three-aisle basilica on the hill of Apollo—where eighth-century burials were also documented (Athanasoulis 2013, 200)—or simply continued in use even into the thirteenth century like the one dedicated to the local martyr Kodratos which had replaced a pagan healing cult (Decker 2016, 105). Although the walls of the Acrocorinth clearly provided security in times of trouble and possibly hosted a garrison and the thematic authorities (as showed by eighth-century belt buckles and lead seals), nevertheless, the city remained inhabited and frequented (Athanasoulis 2013, 201; Brown 2010, 138). It is possible that the *kastro Korinthou* mentioned by Constantine Porphyroggenetos in *De Administrando Imperio* (228–9) could refer to a walled area to the east of the forum (Sanders 2003, 396), which reminds us of Amorium and Hierapolis' enclosures and of the wall around the church at the former Temple of Augustus in Ancyra.

Athanasoulis (2013) has indeed proposed an inventory of those buildings which remained frequented in the transitional period as confirming the Corinth remained inhabited even if the abovementioned ninth-century Chronicle of Monemvasia states that residents temporarily left Corinth (as well as Argos, Nauplion, and Patras) vis-à-vis the Slavic invasion as they found shelter in Aigina, Regium of Calabria, Sicily, and elsewhere (Lemerle 1963, 14). In this light, and in tune with the archaeology of water, it is worth mentioning that the junction of the Lechaion road and the forum there stood a monumental fountain (Peirene) remained in use as channels to other fountains were added at a later stage (Brown 2010, 235). Sanders (2002, 650; 2003, 386–90) has indeed reassessed the degree of monetization of the local economy, which already at the beginning of the ninth century points to monetary payments for tax, goods, and services. The reconquest of Crete in 961 ushered the city into a period of economic prosperity as enhanced by the numismatic evidence presenting us with peculiar trends in the local circulation of coins (lack of noble metal coins and abundance of small denominations in the twelfth century) (Penna 2002, 657). From the late ninth century Corinth became one of the major production centers of chafing dishes, Painted Glazed Wares and Measles Wares reaching central Anatolia (Sanders 2003, 390–2; Yangaki 2008; Poblome et al. 2010, 44–50) as it also was a manufacturing center for silk (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 128). The city was later praised by Niketas Choniates (*Annals*, 44) as an *emporion* (a term used for *extra moenia* districts with commercial function (Athanasoulis 2013, 203) while al-Idrisi called it the largest Peloponnesian city (Jaubert 1936–40, 122–6). The impact of the economic boom visible through pottery cannot be archaeologically proved in terms of urban fabric, structure, and landscape, although pottery workshops seem to have occupied the area of the forum in the late eleventh century as paired with stone-cutting activities (Sanders 2002, 396; Athanasoulis 2013, 205). Local potters were also responsible for substantial technology innovations as demonstrated by the appearance, quality, and quantity of the produced ceramics (Sanders 2002, 651; 2003, 393).

Moreover, a complex of shops and workshops with wooden colonnaded encroaching on the street (Sanders 2002, 652; Athanasoulis 2013, 202–3) developed on the western side of Lechaion Road in the eleventh century; here a residential quarter was also documented with houses that -although poorly built- had courtyards and private wells (Bouras 2013a, 62). Houses with similar planning and building technique have

been documented at Athens (as it will be seen in few moments), Hierapolis and Pergamon (although here the density of the complex developed drastically in the twelfth and thirteenth century (Rheidt 2002, 625; Arthur 2012a, b, 286). It is also possible that the Acrocorinth developed into a larger settlement, for two churches dedicated to the Virgin and bishop Photios are documented for the Middle Byzantine period; in fact, other religious buildings are mentioned by literary sources, including the Cathedral which lodged an icon of Saint Theodore (Magdalino 1993, 178; Athanasoulis 2013, 206). Although it had lost its role as thematic capital in the eleventh century, Corinth retained a strategic place as a commercial outlet across the Aegean shipping routes (and important to Italian merchants), a port of call for the Byzantine navy until its disbandment in the late twelfth century, religious center and finally as important administrative and political center (as proved by the importance of the city in the revolt led by the rogue dynast Leo Sgouros in the early twelfth century) (Magdalino 1993, 149; 491–2).

All things considered, Thessalonike and Corinth provided us with an example of urban resilience predicated upon their important past, the exceptional economic importance of their harbors, their administrative, fiscal, and political role as a regional capital, and their religious prominence. If Thessalonike's walls contained the urban trajectories of the city and its development in terms of fabric, landscape, and planning, in Corinth city-life was rather predicated along polifocal lines (Acrocorinth, the harbors, and the old city) with a development of settlement pattern which for both seem to have taken off from the ninth century on. But what about those cities which could not benefit from a state, Church, and Imperial support of a similar magnitude and scope? To answer this question, four key studies will follow Athens, Thebes, and Monemvasia, and Kastro Apalirou. The former pair betray a classical past in tune with Thessalonike and Corinth, whereas the latter duo emerged as new cities in the seventh century.

First, Athens which has been portrayed by contemporary historiography as a provincial backwater in the seventh-to-ninth century. It was supposedly characterized by demographic shrinkage, lack of political luster (although it can be assumed that the city hosted the headquarters of the Theme of Hellas established in 697 A.D.), and limited economic activities. This period was regarded as a black hole engulfing the city after the famous visit of Constans II in the mid-seventh century until the mid-ninth century Byzantine revival (Kazanaki-Lappa 2002, 640; Cosentino 2008b;

Zavagno 2009, 61–94; Curta 2011, 118–20). Bouras (2013b, 172). This altered the character of the Late Antique city: Hadrian's aqueduct and the bath were abandoned, Classic amenities lay in ruins, and the roads beyond the wall enclosing a large area to the north of the Acropolis as built after the Herulian raid in 267 and incorporating some Classical buildings were covered with soil (Sourlas 2014). It is possible that the post-Herulian walls and the Acropolis continued to offer shelter against the Slavic incursions. In particular, and to the contrary of Thessalonike (and possibly the Acrocorinth), one cannot regard the local Acropolis simply as a military compound for a last-ditch defense (Bouras 2010, 17–20); in fact, it acted as a pilgrimage site centered upon the Parthenon, which was converted into the local Cathedral dedicated to the Virgin in the late fifth century (as also enhanced by the presence of late seventh-century Christian graffiti (Ward-Perkins 1999, 239–41; Kaldellis 2009, 47–53).

As also other temples seem to betray a contemporary (to the Parthenon) conversion (Frantz 1965), as outside the post-Herulian walls, seventh- and eighth-century poorly-built residences have been documented (Curta 2011, 112–5). Moreover, one should turn to sigillographic and numismatic evidence as low denominations copper coins were "injected" into the Athenian market as a result of direct state intervention between 650 and 730 (Charanis 1955). Indeed, coins point to the presence of ecclesiastical elites and state officialdom as well as the persistence of a good level of monetary circulation; this, in turn, proves the vitality of Athens as urban market and shows that the city clearly benefited from its location along the shipping routes linking Sicily (some copper coins minted in Syracuse have been yielded in Athens well into the late seventh century) with Constantinople throughout the Aegean Sea (Curta 2011, 108). This is also showed by the inclusion of the city within the abovementioned productive and distributive network of globular amphorae (Arthur 2018, 282).

Athens remained a small but secure center for the civil, military, and ecclesiastical administration, for one can hardly ignore the fertility of the Attic hinterland, which should have allowed the persistence of the circuit of city-countryside exchange. The Acropolis replaced the Agora as central to the ecclesiastical (as seat of the bishop and as later elevated to the rank of Metropolitan) and political life of the city, as showed by an impressive number of reservoirs an inscription on one column of the Parthenon commemorating the death of a strategos Leo in 848 (Frantz 1988, 93–4; Bouras 2010, 33–7). This could point to the elevation of the city to a thematic capital (Hellas) or as a seat of a *droungos* (commander of a

regiment) (Treadgold 1997, 381). A "promotion" which is reflected by the monetary growth (although less dramatic than in Corinth) and the importance of local aristocratic families which gave two empresses to Constantinople (Irene Sarathapechaina in the late eighth century and Theophano in the early ninth century) (Garland 1999, 73–94; Davids 1995). It seems that these families benefited from the transferring of imperial estates and developed into a class of local *archontes* who played in the local *tzikanisterion* (as their peers in Sparta) and -together with the local Metropolitan- underpinned rising level of local demand and production while also sponsoring the large number of urban churches mushrooming in the city between the ninth and the twelfth century (Bouras 2010, 127–296).

A resurgence of building activity is documented from the mid-ninth century when the Church of Saint John Mangoutis was erected (Kazanaki-Lappa 2002, 642). Bouras (2010) has provided an all-encompassing and cogent overview of the built environment of Athens between the tenth and the twelfth century. Residential buildings, artisanal quarters, and a large number of churches can be documented for the period in the classic agora, the southern slope of the Acropolis, and the Aeropagos and south of the Olympieion. Middle Byzantine Athenian houses present a variety of architectural solutions and irregularity in the plan but had similarities with the one excavated in Corinth. In this light, one should also notice that the building technique could be extremely erratic, as also seen in some Middle Byzantine churches (Bouras 2010, 115). The city was visited by Basil II in 1018, who dedicated his recent victory over the Bulgarian to the Virgin of the Parthenon (Bouras 2010, 307); the importance of the cult (on a par with those of Saint Demetrios and Saint Theodore in Corinth) along Aegean pilgrimage routes and as a marker of city identity are also confirmed by several lead-seals with the image of the Theotokos dated between the ninth and the twelfth century (Koltsida-Makri 2003).

Finally, Athens featured commercial and manufacturing activities for the excavations at the agora have yielded at least one pottery workshop producing glazed and Sgraffito wares (Bouras 2010, 119; Vassiliou 2016, 155–7). Indeed, Athens exported ceramics to Genoa starting in the twelfth century (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 122); moreover, workshops on the Aeropagus and elsewhere in the city together with soap works and tanneries point to the economic vitality of Athens. In the late twelfth century, some Athenian *ergasteria* belonging to the Metropolis employed Jewish workers as purple dying activities for silk clothes are also documented

(Kazanaki-Lappa 2002, 644). These seem to betray a degree of complementarity between Thebes (where silk was produced) and Athens (where it was dyed) (Laiou and Morrisson 2007, 132). In a similar vein with Thessaloniki, cultivated fields were also maintained within the walls, although (as enhanced by sixth-century water mills and miller neighborhood in the agora) they could also be regarded as the other side of a flourishing urban economy as based on artisanal and commercial activities as well as on asset of abundance and fertility (Tzvikis 2020, 46). Indeed, as also documented for other Byzantine cities in the period, the Athenian landowners, as well as the middle and lower classes, were closely bound up with the cultivation of the land (both *intra* and *extra-moenia*) (Kazanaki-Lappa 2002, 644). Nevertheless, as stated (although with a good dose of rhetorical exaggeration) by Michael Choniates, who lamented the decadence of the city, Athens' heyday seems to have come to an end in the late twelfth century (Mercati 1935); the sack of the city by the hands of Leo Sgouros in 1204 brought the Byzantine rulership over the city to an end (Kazanaki-Lappa 2002, 645).

As already referred to, Thebes represented a rather paradigmatic example of the economic boom experienced by the Aegean half of the Byzantine heartland (Haldon 2010, 83). Thebes in the twelfth century was renowned for its high-quality silk cloth. Although hit and deprived of part of its skilled workers by the Norman raid of 1147, the Theban silk industry had fully recovered by early 1160s (Magdalino 1993, 145). Centered around a fortified (under Justinian) acropolis on a naturally defended hill (the Kadmeia) as surrounded by three rivers, Thebes lay in a strategic location (at the crossroads of land and sea routes) and benefiting from a fertile plain around the Lake Copaïs in Boeotia and an outlet in the Aegean (Chalchis) (Armstrong 1993, 295–8). To the contrary of Corinth and Athens and in a way that reminds us of Pergamon and Sardis on the opposite coast of the Aegean Sea, urban life in Thebes seems to have come almost to an end in the late sixth century for faint traces of occupation seem to have been documented exclusively in the fortified Kadmeia (Armstrong 1993, 335). One is, however, left but wondering if the city really fell victim to an earthquake and fire; the lack of proper archaeological investigations due to the continuous occupation of the site from the prehistoric to the modern era do not provide us with a final answer (Louvi-Kizi 2002, 633). Sigillographic and numismatic evidence bespeak of the renewed life breathed into the city by the late eighth century, when also one *kandidatos* Basil sponsored the erection of the church of Hagios

Gregorios (Koilakou 2013, 183). Around the same period of time the Notitiae Episcopatuum named the city first as the archbishopric and later Metropolis of Hellas as Thebes became the capital of the homonymous theme as a strategos was first mentioned by a local hagiographical source (Koilakou 2013, 184).

We possess good archaeology and analysis of ceramics for Thebes in the eleventh century as paired with the abovementioned Cadaster of Thebes (an official copy of a state cadaster) (Svoronos 1959). The latter includes the name of several local *archontes* who played a central role in the administrative and military government of the city, although they did not all reside in the city (Angold 1984, 237–8). They, however, invested their land-based wealth in the towns they clearly exercised a preeminent social and political influence on (Curta 2006, 326). This provided them with an advantage in respect of local commerce and industry, insofar as they resided where production took place (Haldon 2010, 138). The economic boom enjoyed by Thebes affected its social profile of the city, as documented by another unique source I have already referred to: the Typikon of the Confraternity of the church of Panagia Naupaktioissa. This indeed allows us to identify a residential neighborhood south of the Kadmeia whose religious, spatial, and social identity revolved around the church and the monastery as a custodian of a revered icon (Nesbitt and Wiita 1975).

The expansion of the city beyond the fortifications of the Kadmeia is further documented by an increase in coin finds as well as eight churches, residential buildings (with rich sculptural decoration) and a dyeing workshop and a watermill built as late as the late ninth century (Harvey 1989, 502; Koilakou 2013, 184). Moreover, the analysis of pottery (Glazed White Wares II) bespeaks increased imports from Constantinople in the tenth century (Armstrong 1993, 331–5; Vassiliou 2016, 255). Later locally produced Common Wares and Painted wares were also yielded in the city (Poblome et al. 2010, 444–50). It was, however, the silk industry from which the city benefitted immensely. As pipe and pipelines infrastructure has been documented in the city, together with a possible dying workshop, literary evidence (the twelfth-century Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela) (Adler 1907, 68) points to the presence of a considerable community of Jews engaged in the production of silk and purple clothing (Louvi-Kizi 2002, 637). The abundance of water was further secured by the repair of the local aqueduct on the part of the Metropolitan John Kaloktenes, whereas the fertile plain lying at the foot of the Kadmeia provided the local silk industry with good mulberry supply (Bouras 2013a,

61–3). The twelfth century was indeed a period of further urban development for Thebes, with charitable institutions, churches, and urban monasteries being documented (although not archaeologically) and Venetian merchants inhabiting the city. Finally, like for Athens, the city was brought into the Frankish orbit after 1204 (Koilakou 2013, 188–9).

Contrary to the four abovementioned key studies, Monemvasia, on the south-eastern coast of the Peloponnese, had no Classical past. Its foundation was, however, deeply linked with the ancient city of Lakedaemonia-Sparta, as recalled by the Chronicle of Monemvasia, although rather than the abandonment of the latter on the part of the local population vis-à-vis the Avar and Slavic incursions in the late sixth century, there was a period in which the two coexisted (Kalligas 2010, 1–6). The comprehensive and detailed studies of Kalligas (2002, 2010) and Shea (2009) represents the obvious reference points for this brief summary of the fate of a city whose natural defenses (a precipitous outcrop on an isthmus) and massive fortifications earned it the nickname of "God's guarded fortress." In the words of Kalligas (2002, 879), "Monemvasia consisted of an arched bridge, the only connection with the mainland, which gave the city its name ("single entrance"); the port, on the rock, on both sides of the bridge; the fortress on the highest point and the upper city on the platform at the top; and the lower city, or *proasteion*, on the south side by the sea." In particular, the bridge reminds us of the abovementioned similar structure in Amastris as in both cities they separated a double harbor.

Archaeology and material culture are understudied for Monemvasia, and therefore we can only loosely reconstruct the urban planning, fabric, and landscape. The fortifications seem to have been designed and carefully executed with adjecting towers at the corner and an orthogonal outline (Bouras 2013a, 60). One can be tempted into proposing a kind of zoning similar to the one documented for other Byzantine cities: the upper city lodging administrative and military buildings, and vaulted cisterns as well as churches (including the twelfth-century church of Hodegitria) and residential houses for the local elites (Kalligas 2010, 113–20); the lower city occupied a narrow strip of land squeezed between the upper city and the sea. As the local bishop attended the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 and the English pilgrim Willibald visited the city a few decades earlier (on its way to Ephesos and Cyprus), Monemvasia had clearly an important role to play along the trunk route.[3] Indeed, Theophanes in his *Chronicle* (585–6) speaks of the 747–8 plague as carried on ships traveling from Sicily, whereas the Byzantine fleet found shelter by a cove close to the city

as they received news that Syracuse had fallen to the Aghlabids in 878; the link between Sicily and Monemvasia is also enhanced by numismatic evidence (Kalligas 2010, 8–10). The importance of Monemvasia along the axis Sicily-Aegean is also documented by numismatic evidence, and it would be interesting to see if globular amphorae could be documented in the city as they are across most of the stops of the trunk route (Cacciaguerra 2018, 166–7).

Magdalino (1993, 148–9) has indeed proposed a rather interesting parallel between Monemvasia and Venice (to which one could add Comacchio and Amalfi). They were both new foundations (although Venice rose in the early ninth century), protected from land incursions, depending on the sea for their survival, and, finally, boasting semi-independent local aristocratic families who invested in mercantile activities. They stemmed from a dislocation of former urban settlement patterns while at the same time mirroring the urban orientation of secular and religious elites and the artisanal-commercial activities they underpinned. It is not by chance the city has been labeled as the archetypal maritime mercantile town, although with no artisanal activity (Shea 2009, 9). So, we are confronted with a settlement that betrays a combination of functional uses: a fortified refuge in times of threats coming from the hinterland, a locus of maritime traffic, an area of redistribution of the goods and station along the Byzantine navy supply routes (Veikou 2020, 28).

Monemvasia turned into the main port guarding the western entrance to the Aegean in the Komnenian period, as a Byzantine navy squadron was stationed in its harbor. In the eleventh century, a former early Christian basilica in the lower city was restored and dedicated to Saint Anastasia, whose relics traveled all the way from Barcelona (witnessing to the Mediterranean vocation of the city (Kalligas 2010, 171). Other churches were built both in the upper and the lower city, bespeaking of growing urban maritime and economic activities under the Komnenian dynasty. The city counted 20.000 inhabitants (a similar number as Thebes and local *archontes* clearly retained strong links with Constantinople and not only as its local representatives (Laiou 2002a, 51). Although, and building on Niketas Choniates definition of the local *archontes* as “men governed by the intellect who [were] not ignorant of the Paphian goddess of freedom” (*Annals*, 42), the city and its ruling class were not at all semi-independent (Shea 2009, 41).

Not only Monemvasia was pivotal in maintaining and supporting the Byzantine fleet (which remained substantial in the Komnenian era), as

showed by the imperial recognitions in returns for the services of the local mariners and the fact that the city was not among those the Venetians received trade concessions for in the famous 1082 Chrysobull issued by Alexios Komnenos (Magdalino 1993, 192). Moreover, the Mavrozomes are documented as veering for power with other local families of magnates, although they seem to have been close to the Komnenian Constantinopolitan inner circle for Theodore Mavrozomes was one of the commanders of the Byzantine army at the Battle of Myriokephalon in 1176 (when the Byzantine army was catastrophically defeated by the Seljuks); finally, it is worth noticing that the niece of Theodore married the Seljuk Sultan Kay Kushraw I (Kalligas 2010, 24).

In light of the abovementioned evidence, Monemvasia was clearly a city that does not simply stem from security concerns, although there clearly is more than a grain of truth in the legendary transfer of population from Lakedaemonia as reported by the Chronicle of Monemvasia (Anagnostakis 2012); the reality on the ground bespeaks of planning, availability of resources, and centrality along the routes connecting the Aegean with the western Mediterranean and Constantinople. Moreover, in Monemvasia, we can recognize a kind of new ideal of city where defense and trade, as well as fiscal, administrative and military priorities seem to have gone hand in hand. Indeed, as Poulou-Papadimitriou (2018, 29) concludes: the arrival of the Arabs in the in the Aegean wrock havoc in several important areas of Byzantine administration: in defense, in commerce and in the safeguarding of communication routes; urban changes in the region reflected and predicated on it. A good example is represented by the last of the key studies presented in this section: Kastro Apalirou on the island of Naxos.

Like Monemvasia, Kastro Apalirou was also a seventh-century foundation (Hill et al. 2017). Indeed, the island of Naxos in the archipelago of the Cyclades is one of the few referred to by Byzantine sources for the period seventh-to-ninth century, for it was one of the main hubs along the Sicilian-Constantinople trunk route (Magdalino 2018, 19–20). Naxos boasted peculiar dynamics of cultural hybridism along an insular frontier between the Arabs and the Byzantines (Vionis 2013). The analysis of domestic and imported wares, globular amphorae, numismatic evidence, and the decoration of local churches (urban and rural) built in the iconoclastic era point to continuous frequentation of the coastal settlements and, more important, to what Vionis (2013, 115–16) has defined as two complementary insular responses to the imperial and caliphal opposition;

"the first points to material connectivity and religious affiliation with Constantinople (and the maintenance of 'traditional ties'); the second hints at intense encounters with new people and accommodation of new artistic trends from the Arab world (as well as economic stability)."

Nevertheless, and again like in Monemvasia, the Byzantine state remained an important stakeholder as it invested in defensive structures, settlement control, and political and military organization of the Aegean islands. This is enhanced by the creation of the Kybirrhaiotes theme in the aftermath of the Arab naval siege of Constantinople in 717–8 as following upon the disgregation of the old *strategia* of the Karabisianoi (Jeffreys and Pryor 2006, 32) and of those of the so-called Aigeos Pelagos and Samos in the mid-ninth century (Treadgold 1997, 447; 460). Moreover, it is also reflected by the creation of a main administrative settlement on Naxos at Kastro Apalirou. we are confronted with a carefully planned walled town with windy streets, residential buildings, cisterns and other structures, including an elaborate system of water supply (Turner and Crow 2019, 227–8). Kastro Apalirou was in visual contact with the Byzantine fortifications on other Aegean islands and, therefore, possibly of a piece with a well-organized system (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018, 33–4). The settlement had a walled area as controlled by the episcopal and imperial authorities as showed a substantial church (dedicated to Saint George) that occupied a prominent place and was visible from miles away. However, and like in Monemvasia, the fortified outcrop did not include the whole city-life; in fact, below the fortified upper city, a dense but less well-planned suburb (Kato Choria) boasted numerous churches hinting at individual or community sponsorship. Ceramic evidence points to a late-sixth to tenth-century timespan for the frequentation of the new settlement (Turner and Crow 2019, 229–30).

It is clear that with the return of Crete under Byzantine control in the mid-tenth century, the end of the Arab threat, and the centrality of the Aegean within the productive and distributive imperial networks, Kastro Apalirou lost its functional role vis-à-vis the increased importance of Corinth, Athens, and Crete. Nevertheless, settlements similar to Kastro Apalirou can also be documented in ninth century Sicily in the aftermath of the Aghlabid invasion on the islands (Molinari 2019). They are exemplary of a new type of hill-top, fortified, seventh–eighth-century urbanism, bespeaking scale, complexity, and imperial sponsorship: large walled settlements with a dense urban fabric made up of houses, cisterns but (surprisingly) few religious buildings. Indeed, we are confronted with a new

model of urban settlement and landscape that was clearly cutting all ties with the Late Antique urban environment and fabric. Such settlements provided locations where local elites could reside and retain a degree of control over the nearby plains and their landholdings as well as with the nearby islands.

With all these observations concerning the two constituting mainstays of the Byzantine heartland, let us propose some conclusive preliminary remarks concerning the changing nature and quality of urban sites in the Anatolian plateau and the Aegean in the sixth centuries under scrutiny here. First, an important question came up concerning the fortifications and their relationship with the political, administrative, and military importance of each site. The abovementioned examples included both cities (Nicaea, Attaleia, and Thessalonike) where Late Antique defenses were maintained and repeatedly refurbished (even when the population seems somewhat scattered within the walled area) and sites where a sort of zoning (upper and lower city) was created. In the latter case, city life was not confined *intra-moenia* as often foci of settlement (religious or else) could be found outside the walls. Second the role of the imperial administrative, fiscal, and bureaucratic machinery and the military apparatus were clearly important in setting up the walls, but the tempo of the economic functions of these cities was not simply dictated by the presence of state or Church authorities. This is not true exclusively for those thematic centers located on the coastline or boasting harbors that secured a role in regional and (fragmented) trans-Mediterranean shipping routes (Attaleia, Amastris, and Corinth) but also for non-thematic cities (Athens, Monemvasia, and Ephesos) and even for an inland capital-city like Amorium with its dense settlement pattern and its artisanal and commercial quarters. Third, we have been encouraged to look for the ebbs and flows of sub-regional and regional urbanism with a reassessment of the traditional historiographical interpretation of the seventh-to-ninth century as the nadir of urban life. It is a different ideal and ideal as well as reality of city-life we are confronted with (as clearly seen with Kastro Apalirou); the urban economy was affected by the fragmentation of Mediterranean shipping routes and trading system, but cities -mainly along the coast- tells us a story of a resilient life which could morph into different shapes and structures.

Finally, there is the role of Constantinople to be kept in mind. The radiance of its political, social, cultural, and economic sun faded away in Anatolia from the mid-eleventh century on as now blurred by the Seljuk one; this was exactly when the Aegean became its main backyard for its

cities and islands sustained levels of demand and consumption which the capital had not seen since the Justinian era. Cities (and regions) could be muddled by the Constantinopolitan supernova. Bithynia and its capital Nicaea are a good example of this phenomenon as well as the Aegean islands that—according to Theophanes' *Chronicle* (593–4)—experienced the forced migration of artisans and specialized craftsman to Constantinople in 754/5; in fact, those at the insular and coastal peripheries of the empire -as it will be further seen in the following section-seem to have endured the transition from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages better than most of those presented in this section. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the density of the Constantinopolitan socio-economic and political gravity pull, local elites remained urban-oriented where was convenient for them to do so, for cities (although some disappeared while others shrank in comparison to the Late Antique period) provided them with political, fiscal, military and administrative perks and well as good economic returns for their investment (as they often underpinned the artisanal and commercial life of cities) and ways of expressing their socio-cultural identity in ways that cannot be simply attained in the countryside. After all, the *archontes* of Sparta (and Athens) did really like to play polo in the city, and nothing could take that pleasure away from them; unless a church could be built on it as a namesake for a type of religious evergetism which reminds us of the (although secular) one once practiced by *curiales* in Late Antiquity.

3.3 "The other sea": The Byzantine Insular and Coastal *koine* and Its Cities

As already noted, this section of the chapter will focus on the degree of economic and political integration of urban settlements in a wider Byzantine *koinè* that encompassed liminal coastal spaces as well as insular communities, for they also promoted social contact and cultural interchange. This area seems to coincide with the territories and the seas on which the Byzantine Empire (at least partially) retained political and naval rulership. Moreover, it boasted a peculiar set of material culture indicators (like lead seals, coins, and globular amphorae), suggesting a certain common cultural unity (Veikou 2015, 51). In particular, the attention of Byzantinists (archaeologist and historians alike) has been increasingly caught by the military, administrative and economic trajectories of large

islands. Indeed, it has become clear that they remain central to Constantinople's interest, although only Cyprus and Crete remained continuously (although partially) integrated with the imperial fiscal, bureaucratic, and naval machinery until the end of the period under scrutiny here. In other words, islands were more than peripheral figments of a distant Imperial center (Zavagno 2018). They were actors shaping an everchanging cultural and economic balance at the interface between Mediterranean polities in the early Medieval period while at the same time remaining part and parcel of a Byzantine Mediterranean coastal system. I called this "the other sea" as it is opposed although in contact with the Aegean and (to the contrary of it) it seems to have been retained a resilient economic, military, and political life well into the ninth century when Crete was conquered by the Andalusian pirates and Sicily was invaded by the Aghlabids (Cosentino 2013, 69; Poulou 2019).

In light of this, it is also important to consider that the story of insular urbanism is one of resilience and not evanescence; of connectivity and not (or at least not exclusively) isolation; of inclusion in an empire that would not die and not of political desertion on the part of Constantinople (Gordon and Kouremenos 2020, 1–2); of archaeology documenting a selective but continuous occupation and economic vitality of sites like Gortyn and Eleutherna in Crete, Salamis-Constantia in Cyprus, Syracuse, Catania, and Palermo in Sicily and, eventually, Cagliari in Sardinia in the period between the seventh and the ninth century; of new models of urbanism (like in Ragusa and Butera in Sicily) where pride of place is given to security, fortifications and strategic control of the hinterland in the ninth century; of new adaptive strategies in settlement patterns like in Crete (with the rising of Herakleion on the northern coast at the expenses of Gortyn from the ninth century on) and Cyprus where a capital "went missing" in the late eighth century and did not fully reappear until the late tenth century. Finally, the insular urban trajectories abovementioned sites will be briefly projected against the backcloth of coastal cities like Butrint and Cherson which remained fully under Byzantine rulership until the twelfth century.

I will start this brief journey from Crete, where recent archaeological excavations have shown that the city of Gortyn remained the main political and religious focus of Byzantine Crete until the early ninth century-preserved a complex social and demographic structure, a vital economic life, and a political and religious importance in the seventh and early eighth century (Baldini et al. 2012; Zanini 2013) This is reflected by the urban

landscape, maintaining its coherence in term of fabric and morphology, although revealing the first traces of a changing type of urbanism (the "city of islands" model). "Classic" monumentality (for instance, the orthogonal road–network), indeed, coexisted with artisanal workshops and commercial activities that encroached onto the public space (the so-called Byzantine houses complex), pointing to the considerable social and economic vitality of the ecclesiastical and administrative elites (Zanini 2006, 2007, 2009). Indeed, the Church of the *Theotokos Blachernitissae* (today Hagios Titos) and other urban churches (including the Metropolitan church in the area of Mitropolis) or monasteries underwent extensive restoration in the seventh century and remained frequented well into the eighth century, whereas a portion of the city (the Acropolis) was enclosed by a new set of walls in the mid-seventh century and experienced widespread building activity with a military and administrative penchant (Tsigonakis 2012, 81–89; Cosentino 2018; Zanini 2019). Indeed, Gortyn's urban life seems to have "overflowed" the rings of walls crowning the acropolis and develop along throughout foci of socio-political patronage, elite and sub-elite residence, and artisanal and commercial activities which characterized city-life. My reference to water is deliberate here cause in Gortyn we can also document the restoration of the local water system in the sixth century (Zanini 2019, 148–53). The importance of water and its structures are indicators of population levels, density, and occupation of the urban landscape as well as markers of the political status and power of a new class of urban *potentiores* for they presided over the management and location of the distributive outlets which in Gortyn also bespeaks of a multifocal settlement pattern in the seventh century (Zanini 2007, 37; Zanini 2017, 137–9; Giorgi 2017).

The analysis of coin finds, lead-seals and pottery further enhance the picture I have just sketched: in particular, both locally-produced highly decorated painted wares and imported Glazed White Wares I and II (a type of pottery produced in Constantinople from the mid-seventh century onwards) together with globular amphorae (both locally produced and imported), point to the role of the city within the local and medium-distance exchange patterns as well as the consistency of shipping links with the Aegean and the capital as well as with regions under Arab control like north Africa and the Levant (Portale 2014; Costa 2017, 716; Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018, 45–7).

Moreover, a number of late-seventh and early eighth-century copper coins should be linked to the presence of the Byzantine fleet in Cretan

waters and the Byzantine fiscal machinery shaping the movement of goods and the local level of demand (Garraffo 2002, 222–23). This comes as no surprise if one considers that lead-seals as dated to the eighth century (Tzougarakis 1990; Baldini et al. 2012, 246–52). They prove that the island was integral to both the Byzantine administrative system, religious hierarchies, and military machinery: indeed, sigillographic evidence seems to point to a coexistence of two "independent" ruling authorities: the strategos (of the Karabisianoi) and a local archon (a pair which was later to be found in other "confetti" of the empire like Dalmatia or Chaldia (Prigent 2008, 416) and Dyrrachium) (Kislinger 2011, 333–5). It is, therefore, possible to regard Gortyn as an effective center for tax-raising, military organization, and political activity at an imperial level, which at the same time played a pivotal role for the local secular and ecclesiastical elites as documented by the resilience of local *curiales* and the recent discovery of an early-eighth century high-status residence (Brandes 1999, 30; Zanini 2019, 157–8). It seems that Gortyn retained a coherent urban fabric and economic vitality as predicated upon multifunctional islands settlement until the second half of the eighth century (Baldini et al. 2012, 254–72). Although diminished in terms of size and population, a comparison of topographic plans of Amorium and Gortyn has led to conclude that during this period the Cretan capital was larger than the thematic capital of the Anatolikon (Tsigonaki 2012, 82). Indeed, the role of the Kybirrhaiotes in supporting Thomas the Slav's usurpation and, above all, the arrival of the Andalusian pirates (both events happened in the early 820 s) seem to have been the catalysts for a reshuffling of the local urban settlement patterns with an increasing institutional, geo-strategical and demographic relevance of Herakleion on the northern coast of the island already in the late eighth century (Cosentino 2019, 80–5). Recent archaeological surveys at Knossos have also shed light of the transformation of the local settlement hierarchy. Knossos remained frequented and, although impoverished in demographic terms, retained a central role in the administrative and ecclesiastical insular networks until the mid-eighth century as showed by sigillographic and ceramic evidence (Tsigonaki 2007, 284; Randazzo 2020, 461). Nevertheless, from the late eighth century till the early tenth one archaeology shed light on the fading of Knossos as paralleled by the rapid process of urbanization of Herakleion where the archbishopric and the *archon* could have moved ahead of the Andalusian invasion which turned Crete into an Emirate or better and Islamic frontier state with Herakleion-*al-Handaq* as its new capital (Cosentino 2018, 83–9; Randazzo 2020, 456).

The transformation experienced by the Cretan urban hierarchy and settlement pattern in the period between the seventh and the ninth century is further confirmed by recent archaeological studies of the Byzantine fortifications on the island, which have prompted us to move beyond the idea of depopulated and abandoned coastal sites being replaced by smaller inland fortified settlements due to the Arab raids (Tsigonaki 2007, 283–5). The example of Eleutherna is highly relevant here. This city, located on the northern half of central Crete, stretched across terraces covering two steep hills. Like in the case of Gortyn a fortification was built in the seventh century as Eleutherna was also the seat of a bishopric, but as Tsigonaki (2019, 180) concludes, "the fortification does not signal the shrinking of the city and subsequent decline of the urban space but rather the demarcation of controlled areas within the city."

The citadel of Eleutherna was an integral part of its settlement, and although part of a deliberate imperial plan to endow Crete with a network of complex and multifunctional fortifications, it was also meant to highlight and promote the quarter where the local ecclesiastical and imperial elites lived. More importantly, the city was not isolated from the outside world (Tsigonaki 2012, 90–98; Tsigonaki 2019, 172–5). It maintained contacts with the central administration, as evidenced by lead seals and coins. So, archaeology shows that Eleutherna remained an important center, where the fortifications overlooked churches, residential structures, which showed frequentation at least until the first half of the eighth century as a local source mentions that Eleutherna resisted the Arab raids (Tsigonaki 2012, 99–100).

So, in Crete one can recognize both the resilience of the old capital, the presence of a defensive upgrade of local settlements, and -after the Byzantine *Reconquista* in the mid-tenth century- a new urban settlement pattern focused on the northern coast of the island (Chania and Herakleion) for Crete was incorporated into the Aegean exchange system and acted as the southern boundary to it. A similar interpretation of the changes of urban social structures, political governance, and economic life as reflected in urban fabric and planning can be proposed for other insular urban sites, although these have not been as systematically excavated and investigated as Gortyn. As I have mentioned elsewhere, it is, for instance, possible to document a multifunctional image with different foci of settlement in seventh-to-ninth century Salamis-Constantia, the ecclesiastical and political capital of the island of Cyprus (Zavagno 2014).

Salamis-Constantia (see Fig. 3.6), located on the eastern coast of the island, did not simply shrink in size during the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. The construction of a new, well-built fortified enclosure, presumably in the second half of the seventh century, which deliberately cut the aqueduct as well as one of the main axes of urban circulation – the *Cardo Maximus*, reflects planning and the availability of resources. Excavations have revealed that a monumental gate was constructed at the former intersection of the *Cardo* and *Decumanus*, suggesting that the new fortifications were carefully planned to retain part of the ancient street grid. Beyond fortifications, evidence of a late seventh/early eighth-century workshop phase of occupation of the so-called 'Huilerie' complex, a former Roman urban villa located not far away from Salamis-Constantia's harbor, provides evidence of economic activity and continuity (Zavagno 2014, 125–9). A comparison can be made not only with similar structures excavated in Gortyn (so-called Byzantine Houses complex) and in many urban sites of Syria and Palestine but also with other Cypriot sites (Avni 2011). Specifically, excavations at Polis-Arsinoe have shed light on an area of the city composed of workshops, roads, and

Fig. 3.6 Salamis-Constantia (the northern part of the city with the third century Bath-Gymnasium seen from the Theater)

burials close to one of the churches dating to the late seventh/early eighth century (Caraher et al. 2013, 90).

Although for Salamis-Constantia we do not possess the same kind of evidence as in Gortyn for the development of the system of water supply and distribution, we can, however, notice that once the aqueduct was cut, a huge cistern was built inside the walled area whereas at least a second one seemed to have been in use *extra-moenia* possibly serving important urban residential or ecclesiastical foci of settlement like the area around the so-called Campanopetra Basilica (Zavagno 2014, 118–20). The church (originally built in the early fifth century) hosted an unknown relic (possibly a fragment of the True Cross) and therefore lay at the heart of the pilgrimage routes for the Holy Land (together with the Cathedral of Saint Epiphanios and the Monastery of Saint Barnabas) as still frequented in the eighth and ninth century (Stewart 2008. 62–73). The material culture of the period further bolsters this picture of urban resilience. Ceramic evidence suggests that intra-regional commerce included Cyprus and its harbors. Indeed, although local kilns have not been documented, there is clear evidence for the production of domestic wares as well as so-called globular amphorae from 650 onwards on the island; moreover, numismatic evidence shows the presence of specimens issued by Byzantine imperial authority, late seventh- and early eighth-century Arab-Byzantine coins, and Islamic post-reform coins pointing to a trans-regional acceptance and circulation of different monetary units (Byzantine and Umayyad) which reminds us of the situation in seventh and eighth-century Syria and Palestine (Zavagno 2011, 131–4). Seals bearing functions such as *eparchs, diokeitai*, and *archontes* are also important as the latter was the head of the Cypriot civic administration from the eighth to the tenth century. It is possible that that Salamis-Constantia was in the capital of the Cypriot archontate. Still, the presence of high- and middle-ranking officials in the city is further proved by a late seventh/early eighth-century inscription carved on a column of the Bath-Gymnasium (Zavagno 2014, 129). Moreover, we consider that the Cypriot Archbishop continued to reside in the city, as revealed by the lead seals of the see of Salamis-Constantia found in seventh- and eighth-century excavation layers across Cyprus (Metcalf 2004, 340–91).

It is safe to conclude that Salamis-Constantia did not disappear after the Arab raids, as also enhanced by a Fatimid source dated to the early eleventh century but managed to adapt to the new political and economic realities in the island and the broader region (Papacostas 2015a, 28–9).

The adaptive resilience of its cities provided continuity. Yet, political developments affected the island and its role in the context of a Byzantine empire whose control over its southern territories was fading fast. Instead, it probably functioned in zones largely defined by geography and the presence of Byzantine authority (Bakirtzis-Zavagno, forthcoming). In effect, the northern part of Cyprus, the long Karpas peninsula included, was experienced as an extended part of Southern Asia Minor (Metcalf 2009, 468–74). Sigillographic evidence points to the presence of official 'kleisourarchs' in the late eighth and early ninth century, hinting at the existence of a defensive scheme aiming to best administer a key passage area across the mountain ridge separating the northern coast from the central plain of the island (Mesaoria).

Within this organizational scheme, Kerynia (a fortified harbor dating from the eighth and ninth centuries as located on the narrow strip of the island's northern coast) acted as a Byzantine military and administrative hub. Kerynia's harbor strategically served the imperial fleet, presumably playing a role in the first Byzantine attempt to recapture Crete in 911–12. It looks like Kerynia turned into the most important Byzantine city and the main naval base on the island (Scott Petre 2012, 231–4). However, Salamis-Constantia was still functioning as the seat of the local Archbishopric and commercial hub. If Kerynia is sparsely mentioned in events before the return of the island under Byzantine control in 965, its role thereafter has been largely forgotten, if not marginalized (Bakirtzis-Zavagno, forthcoming). This is mainly the result of the widely accepted assumption that Nicosia became the capital of Cyprus immediately after its re-conquest by the Byzantines: a partially distorted perception of historical developments in the island. The supposed emergence of Nicosia as the island's capital, or at least its most important city, in the late eleventh century lay on poor textual references and scanty archaeological record; certainly not sufficient for its designation as capital (Papacostas 2015b).

The five hundred years spanning the period between the seventh and the beginning of the twelfth century mark a period of transition for Cyprus. Contrary to the long-established narrative of the dramatic decline and abandonment of coastal centers following the Arab raids of the seventh century, archaeological evidence and material offer a different view; one of adaptive resilience for urban life and its institutions in Salamis-Constantia as well as in the other cities of late antique Cyprus. The crucial role of Kyrenia as the most critical port-city and naval base has shed light on the strategies of the Byzantine state to maintain access to and control

over the island during a period of transition and political volatility. Moreover, the lack of an established thematic organization in Cyprus and the later rise of Nicosia as an inland urban center point to an asymmetrical yet versatile and practical framework of urban functionalities (a situation I have already referred to as an island without a "real" capital until the eleventh century).

Moving to Sicily, it is clear that the island acted as a fiscal catalyst for the southern Italian territories (Calabria and Apulia), which remained in Byzantine hands (Cosentino 2008a, b, 155–64). It was mainly because of its importance in supplying Constantinople with grain after the disruption of the Egyptian tax-spine in the 640 s and its elevation to the status of theme during the second reign of Justinian II (Nichanian and Prigent 2003, 133–8). Sicily was indeed the only large island of the Byzantine empire to be ruled by a *strategòs*. It bespeaks its centrality to the political, administrative, and bureaucratic imperial machinery, particularly after the fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751. Indeed, the former capital of the Exarchate had experienced a pronounced demise in terms of population, size and fabric, although its memory as former imperial capital was cultivated by the Carolingians and later the Ottonians (Cirelli 2008, 141; Herrin 2020, 353–86). As Ravenna (and its silting harbor of Classe) lost its importance, as also witnessed by the success of the lagoonal *emporion* of Comacchio (Gelichi et al. 2012), Sicily started acting as an economic interface between the eastern and western Mediterranean, lying astride the trunk-route linking the Tyrrhenian with the Aegean and southern Anatolia.

In this light, it would be tempting to regard Syracuse as an exceptional case of urban resilience because it remained the main administrative, ecclesiastical, political, and military center of the island. This was further enhanced by the famous decision of Constans II to leave Constantinople for Italy (with some stops in the Peloponnese as already seen) and transfer part of the central administration and military troops to Sicily turning Syracuse into the center of the Byzantine world until he was brutally assassinated in 668 in one of the city's baths (Jankowiack 2013, 305; as Although the city pulled back to the island of Ortygia, protected by a fortified isthmus (in a way that reminds us of Monemvasia or Amastris), archaeology shows that the main road connecting the two most important quarters of the Roman city (Akradina and Neapolis) were majestically repaved in the second quarter of the seventh century (Arcifa 2016b, 427–37). One can indeed conclude that in Syracuse, although the city shrank, the ancient street grid was (at least partially maintained) until the

late ninth century (Dey 2015, 190–1; Curta 2016, 96–101). Moreover, the Syracusan harbor as protected by a double-walled enceinte (generically dated to the seventh-eighth century) also continued to be frequented by pilgrims, traders, diplomats, and officials for Syracuse remained a regular hub for travelers from both Constantinople and the Adriatic (Maurici 2010, 122–6; Kislinger 2010, 152–6; Arcifa 2016b, 435).

The bustling economic life of Syracuse, preying upon the exceptional agricultural fertility of the islands, is also evidenced by the (possibly) locally produced D-shape type buckles, which pair with other works of local jewelers or metalworkers, pointing to sustained commercial (and other) contacts between Sicily and the rest of the Byzantine world (Nef and Prigent 2006; Decker 2016, 171). Indeed, recent archaeological excavations at Akradina have shed light on an artisanal quarter located along one of the main urban thoroughfares, which in all probability benefitted from the water supplied by an aqueduct that remained in use well into the eighth century (an occurrence documented for Gortyn and Thessalonike) (Arcifa 2016b, 427–30). It seems possible that the aqueduct also supplied some local baths which were still functioning in the ninth century (in a way that reminds us of Ancyra and Amorium) (Arcifa 2016a, 32). Ceramic like locally produced cooking wares and globular amphorae (with the latter revealing diminishing imports from the Aegean from the early ninth century on (Molinari 2018, 296), numismatic (Syracuse was the only mint issuing coins outside Constantinople), and sigillographic evidence (hinting at the presence in the city of military officers) point to the resilience of the urban landscape (Morrisson 1998; Nichanian and Prigent 2003; Guzzetta 2011, 138–41; Prigent 2016; Shepard 2017, 18; Cacciaguerra 2018). Ortygia indeed acted as the administrative and religious heart of the city for both the local Metropolitan Archbishop (like in Athens, the Temple of Athena was converted into the city cathedral sometime in the late seventh century) (see Fig. 3.7) and the fiscal and military representatives of the central Constantinopolitan government resided in the islet (Arcifa 2016a, 37; Arcifa 2016b, 435; Tronzo 2018, 2–6).

So, if the political and military relevance of Syracuse certainly contributed to the resilience of its urban landscape, the sustained level of local consumption did not stem exclusively from the "dirigiste" presence of Constantinopolitan authorities but owed to trade and commercial activities continuing even during the repeated Arab incursions targeting the islands from the late seventh century on (Arthur 2012a, 348–52). It is not by chance that in Syracuse (like in Gortyn) we can even trace the survival

Fig. 3.7 Syracuse, Temple of Athena converted into the Cathedral (late seventh century)

of municipal officials until the eighth century (*defensor civitatis* and a *pater civitatis*) (Brown 1984, 23).

Indeed, other Sicilian cities located on the coast survived although experiencing functional and structural changes in their urban landscape and socio-economic fabric. To the north of the capital, Catania was an important pilgrimage hub, as witnessed by Willibald in the early eighth century. The city was endowed with an impressive set of walls which included the acropolis overlooking the harbor (Arcifa 2009, 82–4; Maurici 2010, 127–33). Recent archaeological excavations in Catania have yielded evidence for continued use of the city (for instance, in the area of the theatre) with the development of two religious foci: the pilgrimage shrine dedicated to Saint Agatha (located next to the northern section of the walls) and the so-called Rotunda dedicated to the Theotokos (reusing a former bath which went out of use in the sixth century; the latter church was further refurbished in the seventh century and continued in use until the sixteenth century) (Arcifa 2009, 79–81).

A further example of resilient urbanism can indeed be offered by Palermo. From the seventh century onwards, as earlier, the city became the main political and religious reference point for the western part of Byzantine Sicily, as shown by the sigillographic evidence pointing to the existence of a local *archon* in charge of local political affairs (Prigent 2018, 24). In truth, it seems that the Palermitan harbor remained active and frequented well into the eighth century and beyond. This is documented by both material evidence (the globular amphorae yielded by urban excavations) and literary evidence mentioning the journeys undertaken by saints (Saint Gregory of Agrigento in the early seventh century), refugees, and those local bishops who traveled to Rome in 602 (Lateran Synod) and Nicaea in 787 (Seventh Ecumenical Council) (Prigent 2018, 17).

Although the Sicilian cities shrank in terms of size and population, the coherence of urban landscape and the reorganization of their urban planning and fabric stemmed less from eighth-century Arab naval threats than from the ability of local elites to navigate the changing political, administrative and military difficulties experienced by the island as part of the Tyrrhenian exchange system (Wickham 2012). This is not to deny that – as we have seen – Sicilian cities were endowed with new fortified areas, but merely to counter the idea that urban life was limited to small *intra-moenia* areas or almost exclusively predicated upon new inland fortresses like those erected at Castronovo, Ragusa, Butera, and Enna vis-à-vis the ninth-century Aghlabid invasion (and in a way that reminds us of the abovementioned Cretan settlement pattern) (Arcifa 2016a).

Among these, it is worth examining Enna as located on a rocky outcrop almost at the center of the island. It was the birthplace of one of the most famous Sicilian saints: Elias the Younger Although his hagiography was written one century later in Calabria, it nevertheless faithfully reports that the fortified castle was one of the first target of the Aghlabid invasion as also reported by Arab sources. Recent archaeological investigations have indeed shed light on the articulated fortified settlement pattern which included two sets of walls: one protecting the lower town and the second encasing the upper fortress (Bonanno et al. 2020, 193). We are here facing a rather more elaborate urbanistic model a model that reminds us of cities like Amorium and Ancyra. Indeed, in Enna the military function had the pride of place for no bishopric is documented (Maurici 2010, 128–9; Kislinger 2010, 161). However, it is worth mentioning that the ceramic evidence yielded in the lower town included globular amphorae and cooking wares similar to specimens found in other areas of the island like in

Cefalú and Marettimo (Giannitrapani et al. 2020, 182–7). They all dated to the period between the eighth and the tenth century and -pending future and further investigations- they may point to a settlement which remained well connected with the insular coastal centers while also assuming a preeminent and strategic role in the military confrontation with the Aghlabids.

As in Sicily Byzantine archaeology has experienced a dramatic improvement in the past twenty years, recent publications assessing coinage and material indicators yielded in different urban excavations and rural surveys have pointed to an island roughly divided in its western and eastern half as based upon ceramic evidence; if eastern Sicily was more linked to the Aegean (Crete) and Constantinople via the abovementioned trunk route, western Sicily was instead of a piece with the so-called Tyrrhenian exchange system as well as Muslim North Africa (Vaccaro 2013). This conclusion is mainly based on the analysis of distribution of lead-glazed wares and the already referred to globular amphorae as well as the so-called ovoidal amphorae interpreted as a sort of continuation of the most common Late Antique container, the LR1 amphorae (Molinari 2018, 295). In particular, as Arthur (2018, 246) remarks, the globular amphorae "illustrates the transmission and flow of a unitary idea or form which underlines formal contact between different [coastal and insular] areas of the Byzantine world despite the economic difficulties of the time." In other words, they are the best markers to highlight the existence of the aforementioned coastal Byzantine *koine,* which incorporates urban and urban-like gateways. It is indeed important to stress that it was from Sicily that the Byzantine political, military and administrative projected toward the nearby island of Sardinia with Cagliari as its capital.

It was from his new capital Syracuse that Constans II legislated on fiscal matters concerning all the western provinces of the empire including Sardinia (Haldon 2016, 207); moreover, although only after the second half of the eighth century, Byzantine coins minted in Syracuse circulated in the island together with Islamic, Lombard, and later Carolingian specimens (McCormick 2001, 354–7; Rowling Jr. 2001, 148).[4] Furthermore, ceramic evidence also points to the role of Sardinia at the crossroads of diminishing but still vital Tyrrhenian shipping routes. Globular amphorae and Forum Wares show that coastal cities of Sardinia did intersect with both regional as well as long-distance commercial networks reaching Rome, Constantinople and even Umayyad Spain via the Balearics (Sanna 2013; Perra 2019) Indeed, Sardinia continuously experienced the presence of Byzantine administrators and military units (and possibly a

detachment of the fleet), as stationed in Porto Torres (on the northern coast) and Cagliari (on the southern coast of the island) (Shepard 2017, 21). This not to deny that Sardinia became a sort of western border of the Empire (Muresu 2018, 336; this in particular after the Balearics fell to the Spanish Umayyads in 903/3 (Zavagno 2019); but rather to assert that this border should be regarded less as an impermeable barrier frequented almost exclusively by military forces, than as a borderland paradigm predicated upon the integrative and connective function of urban insular and coastal hubs (Darling 2012, 58–9). Among these Cagliari had the pride of place. The results of recent excavations confirm that the city remained the religious and political capital of the island well into the eleventh century. Cagliari, like Palermo and Catania, boasted an impressive set of walls mentioned by Procopius and Gregory the Great, which however has only been poorly excavated (Spanu 1998, 173–92). The intra-mural space has already been described as a concentric city. In Late Antiquity it developed into an array of urban clumps taking advantage of the local geomorphology, with the large harbor squeezed between major eastern and western conurbations (Martorelli 2017).

In particular the eastern one contained the well-excavated sanctuary of Saint Saturno, an important pilgrimage church built around the *martyrium* of the saint. The sanctuary, and the attached necropolis (in use until the late seventh century, if not later) entailed the continuous maintenance of the main processional road as also the Classical urban grid seems to have been kept in good condition (Martorelli and Mureddu 2006, 12–69). Both this area of the city and the harbor (which was protected by the walled enceinte in a way that reminds us of Thessaloniki and Ephesos) have yielded a large number of eighth–ninth century globular amphorae (Sanna and Soro 2013, 777–9). Recently, Martorelli (2018, 88) has proposed a sort of duplication of the urban fabric and landscape of Cagliari with the harbor being pivotal in promoting commercial and artisanal activities as well as intercultural (and interreligious) contacts as enhanced by the presence of Greek monastic institutions in the city and by the church of Santa *Maria de portu grutti*. Cagliari might remind us of Ephesus, as in both cases the city developed around two poles: an important pilgrimage center and a harbour (also protected by walls) endowed with a prominent ecclesiastical building which offered supernatural guidance and protection to the sailors in the name of the Virgin.

This also reflected in the continuous role as administrative and ecclesiastical center with the Byzantine dux (and later the archon) as well as the

Metropolitan of Sardinia residing in the city as also enhanced by numismatic (the mint of Carthage was transferred to Cagliari where it issued coins until the second half of the eighth century) (Muresu 2018, 387–419), sigillographic (Spanu and Zucca 2004) as well as literary evidence. For instance, the Revised Royal Frankish Annals mention the arrival at the Carolingian court of some *legati Sardorum de Carali civitate dona ferentes* ("emissaries of the Sardinians from Cagliari who brought gifts"), requesting help against Andalusian pirates (Pertz 1826, 202: 815 A.D.). As Cosentino (2004, 353) remarks: "even in the ninth century Sardinia was still perceived by the Muslims as a province of the Byzantine empire as Ibn Khurdādhbeh between 840 and 845 listed the batriq (patrikios) of Sardinia among the Byzantine provincial governors." In this light, it is also interesting to notice that Ibn al-Athīr considers Sardinia not to have fallen to Islam until attack from the Taifa of Denia which took place in 1015 (Fagnan 1898, 51–2).

So, and as already seen in the case of Sicily, the story of Cagliari's resilience points to a rather different model of insular urban settlement pattern than a simple and hasty run to the hills and away from a coast threatened by the Muslim advance (in a way that also reminds us of other insular spaces like Cyprus). Of course, not all coastal Sardinian cities survived; nevertheless (and notwithstanding the underdeveloped status of urban archaeology available for Sardinia for the period under scrutiny), we possess evidence for a continuous military, administrative, commercial and religious function of some other urban sites. It is worth mentioning Olbia where recent excavations at the city harbor have yielded evidence of continuous commercial activities well into the ninth century (although with a nadir in the seventh century) which runs counter to the traditional narrative of an abandonment of the city after a Vandal incursion in the sixth century (Zavagno 2018, 159). The resilience of medieval urbanism in Sardinia is finally attested by the development of the four *judicates* (whose origins and chronology remained however debated) which shared the political and administrative rulership over the island as partially based in cities like Cagliari, Tharros and Turris Libisonis (tod. Porto Torres) where an eight-century inscription still celebrated the accomplishments of a Byzantine consul and duke (Rowling 2001, 144; Hobart 2017).

Indeed, in the light of the abovementioned surveys of cities of islands, it is possible to use the Sicilian, Sardinian, Cypriot, and Cretan key studies to drive home a short and final comparative point as centered on two examples illustrating the two typologies of settlement I just referred to:

Butrint and Cherson. Butrint on the southeastern corner of the Adriatic has been described as a rural village within the ruins of a big Greek-Roman city with a low-density occupation from the seventh to the ninth centuries (Decker 2016, 96). So, at first sight, we are confronted with an image of a rather isolated center whose few inhabitants were occupying the former acropolis encircled by a set of walls (built in the fifth century). However, the ceramic yielded in two collapsed towers of the eighth-century walled enceinte presented us with a different picture.

One should look at the ceramic finds from the point of view of both trade and shipping as well as their functionality (Vroom 2012). On the one hand, globular amphorae from southern Italy, the Aegean, and Crimea have been yielded together with Constantinopolitan Glazed Wares and glass cullets (Bowden and Hodges 2012, 226). On the other hand, glazed chafing dishes and portable cooking wares were also found; these types of pottery bear striking similarities with exemplars found in Ephesos and Limyra (so-called *authepsae* or self-cooking vessels (Vroom 2008). The appearance of these forms and their widespread distribution across the Mediterranean should indeed point to changing eating habits reflecting as well as a passage from private kitchens to communal cooking spaces (Vroom 2017b). The analysis of the ceramics found in Butrint, therefore, points to a southern Adriatic commercially and culturally (as well as politically) connected with the Byzantine world with more interregional cabotage as well as tramping voyages in the eighth and even ninth century on small status ships similar to some of those found in Yenikapı) (Arthur 2007). Indeed, we are confronted with a sense of belonging to a Byzantine world (*koine*) extending from southern Greece to Sicily as well as points on the Adriatic coastline and strengthened by the prominent use of objects imported from the eastern Mediterranean and by the circulation of Byzantine coinage (Hodges 2015, 215).

As ceramic evidence also pairs with lead-seals and point to the local harbor as located on a strategic seaway which managed to survive the fragmentation of the Mediterranean and its associated landscape, for Butrint archaeology and material culture bespeak a revival after the destructive event which cause the destruction of towers. A large residential building dated to the ninth century (so-called Archon's house) has been shown as re-occupying the ruins of a fifth-century basilica to the south of the walled enceinte for sigillographic (including a seal belonging to a tenth-century *strategos* of Sicily) and numismatic evidence (silver *miliaresion* issued under Leo VI) confirm the administrative role of the household. Moreover,

the refurbishment of the walls hints at a division of the city into an upper and lower city where a large complex for processing mussels was also located (Hodges 2015, 211–3). Ninth and tenth-century ceramics (pointing to a privileged relationship with Otranto on the opposite side of the Ionian Sea), architecture (chapels), and a local *panegyris* point to a more substantial and cohesive urban settlement acting as a stronghold on the western shipping routes to southern Italy and the Tyrrhenian sea (Hodges 2015, 195–199).

So, with Butrint we are confronted with a former urban settlement, surviving as a fortified gateway community (or a bunker) (Shepard 2017) whose material culture, however, showed it as deeply weaved into the Byzantine koine; as also connected with the capital, Butrint acted as a point of irradiation of Roman soft power until, from the late ninth century on, it evolved into a more urban settlement (Shepard 2018). In the latter period, Butrint reveals some analogies with other ninth and tenth-century open cities like the Dalmatian towns of Ragusa, Zadar, and Kotor, which were also ruled by *archontes* (Prigent 2008, 411). As Shepard (2017, 24) remarks: "[they] designated population concentrations in which Byzantium had state, economic and ideological interests [and sites where] commercial and political contacts with the capital were the hunting ground of the local elites; [Dalmatian cities] paid taxes to the Imperial governors [but they can also be] arranged to pay the Slavs in the hinterland to maintain peace, cutting administrative work and achieving low maintenance;" a Byzantine political, diplomatic, administrative, military and ideological modus operandi that one can similarly document at Dyrrachium and Cherson in the Crimean peninsula.

Indeed, for Dyrrachium, one can point a similar urban trajectory as in Butrint, although far less archaeologically documented (and this is somewhat disappointing considering the importance of the city as located at a point to entrance to one of the most important imperial land routes: the Via Egnatia leading from the southern Adriatic coast to Constantinople via Thessaloniki (see above). After being endowed with a robust set of walls in the first half of the sixth century, Dyrrachium developed from a "typical" late antique urban planning and fabric into a fortified harbor which guarded the route to the Exarchate of Ravenna, although any sixth and seventh-century literary source never mentioned it. Archeology provides but a few glimpses of the changes experienced by the city's fabric, infrastructure, and plan: "the establishment of necropoleis in the former heart of the city from the seventh century onwards, including the areas of

the macellum and the amphitheater, the latter having been transformed from a public space to a residential district." (Heher 2019, 175). Nevertheless, the city and its harbor remained an important hub along the east-west shipping routes linking the Aegean and southern Ionian with the Adriatic and Sicily (Kislinger 2011, 327). After the capital of Byzantine Italy fell to the Lombards in 751, the increased political and military importance of the theme of Sicily and its fleet superseded that of Dyrrachium. Its administrative role declined, although sigillographic evidence speaks of the creation of an archontate with the participation of local notables, as it will also be seen in Cherson (Kislinger 2011, 331–3).

The archontate developed into a theme in the second half of the ninth century after Byzantium regain complete control over the southern Balkans and the Peloponnese and as part of a territorial, administrative, and military reorganization of the southern Adriatic (involving the creation of the themes of Kephallonia and Nikopolis) vis-á-vis the increased Arab incursion against southern Italy (Heher 2019, 175–6). Dyrrachium remained strategically relevant to the empire even in the face of the Bulgar threats of the early ninth century as its harbor was the entry point to the Via Egnatia, as showed for instance by a mid-ninth century papal embassy which returned to Italy from Constantinople via Dyrrachium (McCormick 2001, 138–47). Constantine Porphyroggenetos mentions that a large fleet of 150 ousiai (crew of a hundred men each) was stationed in the harbor in the mid-tenth century (Reiske 1829, 664–8; Jeffreys and Pryor 2006, 225–58). The increased importance of Dyrrachium as a strategic military and naval hub of the empire from the tenth century on is confirmed by the elevation of the theme into a ducate as the city later and famously became the first target of Norman invasions in the late eleventh (as famously narrated by Anna Komnene) (*Alexiad*, 135–54; 399–404). – and late twelfth centuries. "For Constantinople, [Dyrrachium] and its province were first and foremost considered as a bulwark against invasions from the West. Still, from the point of view of the economy, [it] does not seem to have played an extraordinary role within the Adriatic trade networks." (Heher 2019, 177).

Contrary to Dyrrachium and Butrint, Cherson remains a settlement with an urban profile, function, and structure for the whole period under scrutiny, although scholars had difficulty in placing it. For Arthur (2006a, 34), it represents a successful Byzantine city on a par with Venice and Naples; for Brandes (1989, 26) simply a peripheral city existing under peculiar circumstances; finally, Haldon (1990, 96) compared it to

Amorium for in both the genuine pattern of urban supply and demand was not maintained simply by the state and the Church. It is tempting to see Cherson simply as a distant outpost and a place of exile for the "enemies" of the empire like Pope Martin and Justinian II (McCormick 2001, 854; 857). However, the continuity of the regular street grid inherited from the Hellenistic era (as in Thessaloniki and Nicaea), the presence of a mint, the activity of bronze and pottery workshop producing tiles, ceramics and globular amphorae and the dominance of Byzantine funerary rites all point to the economic vitality of the city between the seventh and ninth century (and even beyond) and its integration in the Byzantine political and cultural *koine* (Bortoli and Kazansky 2002, 660–2; Romančuk 2005, 201–11; Negrelli 2012, 292; Curta 2016, 104–5).

The latter point is further driven home by archaeological and literary sources: Cherson was visited by the famous missionaries Methodius and Constantine delivering a sermon to the local merchant community in the mid-ninth century (Curta 2006, 121–4). The same period saw a diffusion of Byzantine coins from the Sicilian mint of Syracuse: not only did these coins were yielded in Cherson, but they were also found in different Balkan sites also for they were possibly dispersed by troops who had served in Italy and in defense of Sicily against the Aghlabids (Arthur 2012a, 346–7); lead seals belonging to kommerkiarioi suggest a trade network across the Black Sea (Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 514–21); finally, locally made ceramics bear resemblance with contemporary pottery from Naples and Rome have been yielded as Cherson was part of the globular amphorae Mediterranean network (Wickham 2012, 509).

This does not imply that the city did not experience changes in terms of topography and urban fabric as well as a progressive integration in the Byzantine political, administrative and military governance structure. The growing importance of the city as a trade and diplomatic center, on the other hand, contributed to this that a theme was created under Emperor Theophilos (Zuckerman 1997). It is possible that the city walls were refurbished in this period when -according to an interpretation of a passage of the late ninth century Arab geographer Ibn Rusta, Hungarian sailors visited the *karh* (an Arabic word of Aramean origin meaning city) (Polgar 2004, 16–7). The city entertained strong commercial and diplomatic relations with the Kazhar kingdom dominating the steppes to the north of the Black Sea and remained substantial well into the twelfth century (Bortoli and Kazansky 2002, 662).

Indeed, a fortress, incorporated within the town walls, was symbolic of the city's military role whereas the port and the commercial activities it lodged persisted throughout the whole town's history (Bortoli and Kazansky 2002, 659). Although it is true that -street-grid aside- the main components of the urban building structure had changed from the Classical era, as the city was indeed defined by its city walls and the churches built in it, archaeology has documented residential quarters and artisanal activities (Romančuk 2005, 69–110; 147–86). On the one hand, the economic vitality of the urban settlement was geared toward the Khazars to the north than to the Byzantines in the south during the eighth and early ninth centuries (Shepard 2009, 426–8); on the other hand, it was in turn underpinned by the local elites as lead-seals and literary evidence point to the fact that Cherson retained its local administration at least until the end of the tenth century. In fact, and in a way that reminds us of Palermo, Syracuse, and Gortyn, the power of its municipal council (composed of the *protes/proteveroi*) remained substantial even when Cherson was elevated to the rank of thematic capital during the reign of emperor Theophilos (Brandes 1999, 31). In this light is also interesting to notice how the coins issued in Cherson from the reign of Michael III onwards were struck either in the name of the *protevoreoi* or the archontes (Vrij, forthcoming).

The social importance of the local notables in the administration of the city is vouched for by Constantine Porphyrogennetos' *De Administrando Imperio* (60–5) in the tenth century; nevertheless, it still evolved under the influence of the political situation and the interests of Byzantium who also detached Imperial officials to Cherson (Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou 2016, 569–70). This is shown, for instance, by the creation of the title of Kyros (lord) attested from the eighth century on as enhanced sigillographic evidence from the by two seals belonging to one Leo, hypatos and lord (*kyrios*) of Cherson (Curta 2016, 99). For the 9th and 10th centuries, there are traces of construction work and as well as further renewal of individual parts of the defensive walls. In this period, one can document the appearance of a new type of church: the cross-domed churches (Romančuk 2005, 83–6).

Finally, and following upon a catastrophic earthquake in the early eleventh century, a new phase of construction activity is documented in Kherson for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some of the basilicas were rebuilt when the fortification wall in the harbor district was moved along the coastline. Some curtains and towers have been renovated and rebuilt.

From that time on, a break occurred with the ancient building traditions; residential houses were erected in the immediate vicinity of the fortifications as building activity was also documented in the northwest part of the urban area (Romančuk 2005, 234–5). Between the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, Cherson retained its importance within the Byzantine administration, for from this outpost north of the Black Sea, the empire was still able to control southwestern Crimea (Bortoli and Kazansky 2002, 663).

Two features seem to characterize urbanism in the Byzantine insular and coastal koine. First, cities could show a strikingly high level of economic activity, which lasted for the whole eighth century. The fragmentation of the Mediterranean shipping routes obviously impacted most of these cities, as did the insecurity of the seventh-to-ninth century period. Fortifications did indeed become integral to the development of insular urban centers, but defenses did not equate to an abrupt abandonment of the coasts. Urban resilience also stemmed from the persistence of levels of demand and regular if not frequent regional and sub-regional contacts. This is shown by the network of globular amphorae (as well as chafing dishes) and coinage, proving once more that unified a Byzantine maritime *koine* was predicated upon common material culture and cultural habits.

Second, Constantinople did not turn its back to these outposts but retained a very strong interest in their political and administrative governmental structures (as enhanced by lead seals and literary sources). It is, however, true that this interest did not simply translate into the creation of fortified hubs but included the possibility of accommodating diverse types of urban settlement patterns as modulated by the pressure exerted by other military and political actors and by the ebbs and flows of Byzantine naval power. The diversity of imperial administrative, fiscal, and military officials residing in the insular or coastal urban sites (from *strategoi* to *kyroi* and *archontes*), as well as the resilience of local secular (as well as religious) elites (like in the case of Gortyn, Palermo, Syracuse, Cagliari and Cherson), shaped an urban landscape where street-grid were maintained, infrastructure ecclesiastical buildings were refurbished, harbors were frequented by ships and travelers, and artisanal and commercial workshops dotted the urban fabric as the latter developed around and beyond a fortified administrative and religious center. This not to deny that urban life could shrink to bunkers (Butrint) or that peculiar settlement patterns could eventually develop vis-à-vis the presence of the Arabs (like in Cyprus) or that military needs could lead to the creation of walled settlements along an internal frontier (like in eastern Sicily in the aftermath of the Aghlabid invasion).

One should also consider that Sicily and Syracuse were lost in the late ninth century, Cyprus was returned under full Byzantine central for one century only (and, by then, a "true" capital, Nicosia, was fully established in the center of the island), as only Crete remained fully incorporated into the empire (as the southern border of the Aegean exchange system) until the Fourth Crusade. Nevertheless, coastal sites like Cherson (and one could add Naples, Comacchio, Dalmatia, which I could not fully include in this brief section) should help us to propose a different picture of Imperial maritime spaces to be regarded less as a distant boundary and more as a kaleidoscope of open cities (and bunkers): for as Harrison (2001, 95) concludes "centers did exist (politically, economically, mentally, ideologically, military) but their most conspicuous part is when they met the periphery." This also stresses the concept of connectivity as both intrinsic to the insular (and coastal) Byzantine urban worlds and corollary to the strategic position these hold across Mediterranean shipping routes; indeed, the process of commercial as well as political communication across the Mediterranean boundaries necessitated and at the same time nurtured flexible urban (and urban-like) settlement patterns.

Notes

1. An exhaustive list of all the publications and excavations reports concerning the city can be found at https://biaa.ac.uk/research/item/name/amorium-excavations; whereas the most recent updates on the activities at the sites as well as a 3-D reconstruction of the city can be retrieved at https://www.amoriumkazisi.com/EN-index.html
2. The reference is to the title of a John Freely's book (Freely 2008).
3. On Willibald's itinerary see McCormick (2001, 127–37) with further bibliography.
4. Their contemporary circulation in Sardinia testifies to a trans-regional and trans-cultural acceptance of different monetary units in a way that reminds us of contemporary Cyprus and the Balearics (Zavagno 2019, 150).

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CHAPTER 4

General Conclusions

Abstract This chapter will sum up the nature and characteristics of the changes in urbanism in Byzantium show variations (in regional and subregional terms) which allow us to sketch different trajectories of development for the cities of the Byzantine empire. They should be pitted against each other to understand how different local needs produced different multifunctional real "urban" answers to the problems and challenges which presented themselves along with the ebbs and flows of the history of an Empire that would not die and indeed managed to navigate through streams of gold and rivers of blood until it fell (but not for the last time) with the Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople.

Keywords City • Byzantium • Regionalism • Functions

This book has focused on urban variations and transformations within a shared political, religious, and cultural framework represented by the Byzantine empire. It has tried to propose a comparative and diachronic overview of Byzantine cities as located in its main regional constituencies and as part of a larger Mediterranean socio-political and economic world. The latter was characterized by a fragmentation of the Roman and Late Antique unity as it entered the troubled waters of the Medieval era. It has

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emerged that this fragmentation influenced the single regional basins for internal geographies (as paired with local topographies) led some of the cities located in the Byzantine heartland to develop social, administrative, cultural, but above all economic trajectories (at least partially) similar to those urban entities situated in what I described as Byzantine insular and coastal koine.

Much has been written on Byzantine cities in terms of land-based and fortified outposts of resistance, particularly for the period between the seventh and the ninth century. Little room has been given to the overlapping functionalities of many of these urban entities as benefitting from their role along local, regional and trans-regional shipping routes. Only from the ninth century on, the cities of the Byzantine Aegean have been recognized as awakening from their "transitional sleep" and benefitting from the economic resurgence of the eastern Mediterranean and the political expansion of the empire. A comparative look has allowed us to realize that many of those cities (even those most strongly engrained in the Byzantine state organization, military, and fiscal network) experienced previously unsuspected levels of economic vitality even in the *nadir* of the Mediterranean disaggregation. A drastic development in the quality and quantity of urban excavations, publications of numismatic and sigillographic evidence, and ability to identify the primary ceramic markers for the period under scrutiny here (from globular amphorae to glazed and painted wares) lay at the foundation of this nuanced picture of urban resilient adaptation and transformations in terms of socio-economic life.

Nevertheless, this does not want to be a call for continuity in disguise. Many cities bore the full brunt of the post-Roman changes, and some (with a Classical past) yet ceased to exist even when located along the coast, like some Pamphylian cities (Foss 1996). Others (Kastro Apalirou) appeared from scratch in the seventh century but disappeared again; finally, others were "reactivated" in the Middle Byzantine era after having sleepwalked through the Dark Ages (like Butrint, Hierapolis, Sagalassos, and Pergamon). Moreover, most of the military organization and coherence of the Byzantine taxation system lay at the basis of the shipping networks and routes that allowed coastal cities to survive (for instance, Ephesos, Athens, and Monemvasia). However, a window into the Byzantine Mediterranean helped to deconstruct some of the tendencies

which has been too hastily taken as main characterizations of Byzantine urbanism. More importantly, it allowed me to propose a narration that was not entirely based upon a clear chronological and simplistic partition. In other words, we cannot simply think that all cities of the empire turned into walled corpses or, at the best, zombies (with Constantinople and Thessaloniki as the "Red Queens") until a return to life from the ninth century on.[1]

First, one should reassess the role of fortifications as too often regarded as the only catalyst (together with the local cathedrals) for Byzantine Medieval urban fabric and landscape; or as defining *loci refugii* for a few imperial administrators and the clergy and occasionally for the scattered population inhabiting a demographically impoverished countryside. One should better connotate Byzantine cities as multi-focal and multifunctional settlements, sometimes loosely contained within massive Late Antique walls (like Nicaea, Attaleia, and Thessaloniki), sometimes pairing an upper city with a walled lower town; sometimes witnessing deliberate planning (zoning) as characterized by functional foci of settlement coalescing around religious structures and economic infrastructures. Moreover, one should admit that with fortifications, there was more than met the eye of a defender or an attacker, as seen in the case of Thessalonike and partially Amastris, Attaleia, and Ancyra. In other words, they should be used less to construct that de- and reconstruct a narrative of abandonment or sheltering. Massive ramparts could establish and separate districts; they could be part of a rather complex and fortified system of that dotted the region they belonged to; finally, they could even betray a response to internal social unrest (Bakirtzis 2010, 353–6; Tsigonaki 2019, 180). Moreover, they acted as significant players in the socio-political, spatial and cultural dynamics of city life as spolia and inscriptions embedded in them manifested the role played by imperial, religious, and local elites in constructing the urban fabric and stimulating the sense of belonging to a settlement with a specific and peculiar identity.

Second, one should remark the resilience of the economic life of many of these cities. Archaeology and material culture, conspicuous as they are from the late ninth to twelfth century period, made this obvious (particularly for the Aegean as seen in Thebes, Athens, Monemvasia, and Corinth). Still, it was less discernable for the previous centuries. As we have seen, the economic functionality explains the transformation of the urban fabric,

landscape, and planning in both centers with preeminent military and political role in the new fiscal and administrative imperial thematic system and those supposedly having minor relevance in the eyes of Constantinople. It proves that secular and ecclesiastical elites prefer to inhabit cities when possible and convenient in political, social, and economic terms. The survival of the street grid, as central to the ceremonial modes of expression of socio-political preeminence and the continuous role of local magistrates and magnates in the insular and coastal koine, could be seen as red herrings for urban-oriented elites. Together with the members of the bureaucratic imperial machinery and the navy and army officers and the local bishops and their clergy, they underpinned levels of demand, which led to the presence of artisanal and commercial activities. These would (at least partially) explain the partial demonumentalization of the urban fabric. These activities became paramount in the Middle Byzantine period somewhat because we know the material culture better as higher level of wealth were produced and distributed across the empire. But occasionally, and as better seen on islands (but also in Amorium), they existed beforehand.

Indeed, one should not forget that the Mediterranean city in Late Antiquity was an artificial creation of local elites (Holum 2011, 15). So, when they were forced to change their socio-political, economic, and cultural facies -whenever possible- they tried and continue taking advantage of the political-administrative, and religious functions of any urban settlement. They fueled an urban economic vitality mirrored by the artisanal workshops and commercial shops encroaching onto classic public buildings and open spaces. In this light, we can see how the urban economic function tallies with the social one for the city was regarded as a reference for the population of both its agricultural hinterland and (in more general terms) its regional context. The example of Gortyn and its waters' flow is paradigmatic for cities that remained the meeting point of micro-ecologies and macro economies.

Therefore, the reshaping and reorganization of the imperial superstructure in the seventh and eighth century ushered urban life to a new era and lay the basis for the following regional trajectories. Imperial needs changed, and Constantinople obviously played a significant role in this; however, this does not imply that life was sucked out of any city, although -as McCormick (1998, 51) asserts: "Constantinople remained the arbiter of social prestige bearing witness to the cultural power of the imperial aristocracy." In fact, it entailed a deconstructing and reconstructing of urban settlement patterns and regional hierarchies along

regional (and sub-regional) lines and according to the ebbs and flows of the Byzantine military and political fortunes. The case of Sicily and Crete are paramount here, as shown by the coexistence of structured forms of urban life (Gortyn, Eleutherna, Syracuse, and Catania) with a later "castralization" of some urban sites (in Sicily) or an entire reorientation of the urban hierarchy (in Crete and Cyprus). Similarly, in Anatolia during the Komnenian era, the importance of fortified settlements along the Byzantine-Seljuk frontier (Lopadium, Dorylaeum, and Anchyalous) paired with those of more urban-like centers like Nicaea, Priene, and Pergamon.

The latter assertion is in tune with a third point that has been asserted across the book. It has to do with the ability of the empire to adopt different means of political, cultural, social, and even religious integration of local elites. Urban centers (together with other forms of militarized settlements) had pride of place in this: the newly established ones (some with a better fortune than others) like Monemvasia or Kastro Apalirou as well as the re-functionalized preexisting settlements both inland (Enna) and along the coast. They drew what Veikou (2015, 54) has described as "a dynamic picture of settlement and communications of different sites were also the result of a constant re-negotiations of human relations both within the microcosm of a region and with the rest of the known [Mediterranean] world."

This picture can be painted with a palette of functional colors upon new roles (cultural, political, religious, administrative, and economic), which molded the structural and social fabric of the city. The Byzantine state, its fiscal and bureaucratic machinery, the military apparatus (the navy and army) as well as the Church were responsible for implementing the primary chromatic tonalities (walls and ecclesiastical buildings) in particular in time of crisis; nevertheless, it would be wrong to imply they encompass the true colors of the city. The nature and characteristics of the changes in urbanism in Byzantium show variations (in regional and sub-regional terms) which allow us to sketch different trajectories of development for the cities of the Byzantine empire. They should be pitted against each other to understand how different local needs produced different multi-functional real "urban" answers to the problems and challenges which presented themselves along with the ebbs and flows of the history of an Empire that would not die and indeed managed to navigate through streams of gold and rivers of blood until it fell (but not for the last time) with the Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople.

Note

1. The reader will excuse the reference to a sub-pop culture movie like those of the Resident Evil series; however, a rather more subtle and academic reference is hidden in this: the famous passage in a fourth-century letter of Saint Ambrose describing the formerly prosperous Roma cities of the Italian peninsula as "*semirutarum urbium cadavera* (semiruined urban corpses)". Ambrose, E*pistolae*, XVI, 39.

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Abbreviations

AA	Anatolia Antiqua
ABSA	Annals of British Schools at Athens
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AM	Archeologia Medievale
AS	Anatolian Studies
BCH	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
BSl	ByzantinoSlavica
Byz. Forsch.	Byzantische Forschungen
Byz Zeit.	Byzantische Zeitschrift
CCEC	Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DTCAE	*Deltion Tes Christianikis Archaiologike Etaireias*
EJPCA	European Journal of Post Classical Archaeology
HEROM	Journal on Hellenistic and Roman Material Culture
IstMitt	Istanbuler Milleilungen
JGA	Journal of Greek Archaeology
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
MEFRM	Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge
MHR	Mediterranean Historical Review

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PP Past and Present
REB Revue des études byzantines
SBS Studies in Byzantine Sigillography
TM Travaux et Mémoires

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